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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASVATI MAHAL

HURSTWOOD.

VOL. III.

HURSTWOOD:

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A

TALE OF THE YEAR 1715.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

If we turn our eyes towards our hero, we shall find him still a welcome guest at the farm-house in the valley, and in the enjoyment of all those simple comforts to which he had been long almost a stranger. Yet he did not, like the Lapland king Hacho, suffer the honey of repose to vitiate and paralize his energies. Though so apparently remote from danger, yet he by no means felt secure of its absence, and consequently whenever he went forth, he took care, as well as he was able, to be prepared for its approach.

Godfrey, as we have before mentioned, had, on his return from his expedition through Byewood forest, as the escort of Rachel and the housekeeper, been severely and insultingly treated by his father-in-law, and in consequence had deserted the hut on the shore, and after taking what vengeance was in his power upon the ferocious and overbearing Reuben, concluded by seizing upon the boat and joining young Hurstwood on the opposite coast.

Aware, however, that his retreat would be suspected, and that he might be the means of a double capture, he was from the moment of his arrival in the valley exceedingly anxious to secure another and a safer retreat, and held many consultations with his friend the farmer about it.

We have already mentioned, that with the exception of a mansion which belonged to the great landed proprietor of that part of the country, there was no habita-

tion near the farm-house either likely to annoy the fugitives by its propinquity or to afford them a secure refuge in time of need. To the mansion itself, which went by the name of Covecourt Royal, from being in former times a regal tenure and place of strength, the farmer was most disposed to turn the attention of his guests; and as it was spacious, seldom frequented by its lord, and sufficiently secluded, he thought it offered well to serve their purpose, in case they feared interruption and danger by continuing with him. He added, that there were at present but few domestics in the house, and that he had little doubt of their being prevailed upon to admit two strangers for a short time, in consideration of a fair reward.

Harry was delighted with this proposition the more, when he was informed that the boat might be so stationed among the rocks, that in case of any surprize they might easily make off without much

danger of pursuit. He accordingly volunteered to visit the Hall, and to arrange matters that an immediate removal might be effected.

A short and romantic walk brought him within sight of the mansion. Anxious, however, to accomplish his object, he did not once pause to dwell upon the natural beauties that alternately presented themselves, but making directly to the porch, he repeatedly thundered at the door with the heavy knocker which was attached to the massive oak. No answer however was returned to his appeal, but the dismal reverberation through the lofty hall and distant passages. He looked around. All was still and silent as the grave. Not even a breeze quivered among the long grass or sighed round the angles of the building. He shouted, but echo alone replied to his voice. Desolation and decay seemed to be the only inhabitants of these solitary precincts.

Foiled in his attempts, Harry Hurst-

wood stood in the porch, irresolute how to act. As his eyes were directed to the desolate scene before him, or dwelt upon the grey and tufted walls of the mansion, or the moss-covered steps that fronted its spacious entrance, he thought of his own situation, once fortunate and flourishing, now forlorn and wretched, all his laurels withered, all his prospects blighted past hope of recovery. Almost he felt as if the chill and icy finger of despair was pressing upon his heart. He was alone — the eye of heaven only looked down upon him; — yet around — dangers beset his path — every door seemed shut against him — hatred and revenge dogged his very footsteps — death in its most horrid shape hovered over him.

Unable to bear the oppression of his feelings — he darted from the porch, and with that hurried step which is natural to those who would escape from themselves, he made a circuit of the building, hoping either to make himself heard, or if the

place was really uninhabited, at least to obtain an entrance at some side door or neglected casement.

All, however, was closely secured, and despairing of any present success, he turned with the intention of proceeding to the farm by another route, when a path rather more worn than the others attracted his attention, and he determined to pursue it. As he went along, almost he repented his choice. It was precipitous—dreary—and wild, and on reaching the base of a steep and rocky bank, down the edge of which it conveyed him with many windings, he paused for a moment, hesitating whether or not to proceed.

The sun had now set;—the clouds were heavy and dark,—and it promised to be one of those mirky nights

> "When churchyards yawn, and hell itself
> "Breathes out contagion to the world."

Already was his foot advanced to make

good his retreat from this lonely spot, when the gentle but rapid sound of a light step caused him to turn. A few paces from him, the path abruptly pursuing the projection of the bank, rendered it impossible for him to perceive who or what was approaching. In anxiety the most extreme, he waited the presence of the supposed habitant of this melancholy spot. Intensely did he listen — all was again silent, and he endeavoured to persuade himself that fancy had deceived him. He proceeded on his ascent, but a conviction of the reality of what he had heard, flashed so strongly upon his mind, that he resolved to pursue the path, and seek for some elucidation of this strange circumstance.

He turned the gloomy corner where he had first stopped. How varied was the scene! A small bay hemmed round with rocks, and displaying a semicircle of white and smooth sands, lay before him. The water, though reflecting on its sur-

face the gloomy aspect of the heavens, yet burst upon the shore with no angry ravings. The advancing tide, in long and gentle lines, almost imperceptibly encroached upon the beach; and the murmur of the waters would scarcely have been heard, had not an almost unnatural stillness pervaded all nature. The evening and the scene were alike of that awful solemn cast, which they alone can know who have sought out and loved nature in her sombre mood.

Harry Hurstwood had sufficient of romance in his disposition to yield himself up to the influence of external objects. He stood for a moment fully impressed with what was before him, when accidentally turning his eyes to that portion of the sands which stretched to his right, he saw a figure standing on the brink of the water, and looking intently over the boundless range of ocean.

Actuated by an impulse, the propriety of which he did not stay to consider, he

rushed forward. His approaching steps aroused the stranger. It was a female. He was within a few paces when she turned hastily round. To look, — to utter a loud exclamation of surprize, — and to find Rachel in his arms, was the work of a moment! It was indeed no other than his beloved Rachel; and he took advantage of the first burst of feeling to press that half inanimate form to his bosom, which so exclusively, so arbitrarily reigned there.

Rachel, who had been taking her usual solitary walk on the beach, did not for a considerable time so far recover her composure on this singular meeting, as to be able either to give a distinct account of her own situation, or to make any thing more than a general enquiry concerning her lover's. Lover indeed he was, and her heart admitted the claim. At the very moment that he saw her standing upon the beach, — her eyes fixed upon the waste of waters — at that moment,

her thoughts were far away. They were fostering images of love under the guise of friendly solicitude, — they were comparing her own hard and friendless lot with that of the being whose love she felt conscious of possessing, — they were warmed by gratitude and pure affection, — they were heightened by admiration, — they were rendered delicious by hope.

After the ardour of the first meeting, a mutual embarrassment took place. Hurstwood was fearful least he had offended — Rachel was distressed, yet knew not how to look angry. A long pause ensued. They stood together upon the shore. The rippling waves kissed their feet. The encreasing gloom of the evening, — the universal stillness, — rendered their situation still more awkward. Rachel feared lest the violent beatings of her heart should betray her emotion. — Hurstwood knew not how to speak, lest the anxious warmth of his enquiries might at once offend and alarm.

Yet could their hearts have known each other, — could all have been laid open that had passed there since they last parted, — had gentler fortunes smiled upon their prospects, and a sanction not been wanting to the unreserved disclosure of their ardent and virtuous affections, — then had they not stood silent and fearful; but their souls, unshackled, would have mingled in one effusion of lively admiration, and of ardent, generous, and eternal love!

Hurstwood ventured at length to break a silence, which each succeeding moment rendered more awkward. "If my dear Miss Kemyss," said he, in a voice somewhat faultering, "will forgive the imprudence of feelings, which have been too much harrassed by misfortune not to be overpowered by the first rush of pleasureable emotions, I would become her suppliant, and crave for an explanation of the strange, yet delightful, circumstance of our present meeting. Little did I think

that, in searching for a secure retreat from my enemies, fate destined me to meet her for whom I am most anxious to preserve an existence already forfeited. Yet so it is; and however tempestuous my future course may be, I will never murmur, if but a few such happy intervals are permitted to cheer my progress."

Rachel, as yet feeling herself quite unequal to come to a regular explanation of the late events and her present situation, merely replied generally to Harry's questions. Yet as they walked slowly along the beach, she was almost surprized at the feeling of happiness that fluttered round her heart. She had found a friend, —a very dear friend,—the friend of all her hopes, — the companion of her thoughts, — the tenant of her heart; he was now walking beside her; and she felt too happy, too delighted, not to wish for the uninterrupted enjoyment of her sensations.

They had not walked far, however, ere the illusion begun to vanish; and as she looked out upon the encreasing gloom of the evening, propriety suggested her departure. As she bent her steps towards the Hall, which was now seen towering above them in all its bleakness and all its loneliness, Hurstwood seized her hand, and eagerly enquired whether they were again to meet.

"O yes!" replied Rachel. "I hope often. But not now. I am so oddly, so strangely situated, we must wait for happier days."

"Wait!" replied he, "why wait? If you are strangely situated, so am I. We are, I fear, companions in misfortune; then why should we not endeavour to assist each other? If Miss Kemyss had it in her power to save my life, would she allow an unnecessary delicacy to impede her exertions? No. I am convinced she would not, though I was her

bitterest enemy, instead of her warmest friend."

"If one so dependent and so unfortunate as I am," said Rachel, "can be of any real service, I shall fear no risk in the attempt; but I confess I am at a loss to conceive it."

"I hope you will credit me, when I assure you," replied he, "that my life is in your hands. You seem unwilling, at the present moment, to enter into explanations; but O let me have the sweet assurance, that I may again see and converse with you. Why should we not act in concert, if we are both the victims of the same persecution? I have much, very much, to say; and I burn to hear what fate has brought you hither. I fear you need a protector, and you know full well where to look for one."

"Indeed, I am eternally indebted to your kindness," replied Rachel, while the remembrance of her forlorn state brought

the tears into her eyes. "I fear, however, lest you may be observed, and the consequences may be fatal to us both. Yet, I am equally desirous to tell my story, and seek for some elucidation of facts, almost too extraordinary for recital."

"Then shall I see you here to-morrow morning?" eagerly demanded Hurstwood.

"By no means in the morning. I shall walk here a little before sun-set."

The shrill voice of the houskeeeper, who was descending a rude flight of steps which led from the mansion, interrupted an interview, which appeared very short to the lovers themselves. Hurstwood, fearful of being discovered, snatched one parting kiss from the hand of his mistress, and turning the extremity of the promontory, hurried towards the farm with a lighter step and fuller heart than he had left it; with the determination, however, of concealing from his

friends, for the present at least, the unexpected occurrences of the evening.

With mingled feelings of surprize and pleasure did Rachel return to the solitude of her apartment after this short interview. Once there, she threw herself upon a seat, and though the night was quickly advancing, she did not, as usual, order lights to be brought, in order that she might more freely indulge the rapid current of her thoughts.

When the soul is weighed down with affliction, when all our terrors are awakened by mysterious doubt and dreadful uncertainty, when we have begun to feel as it were alone in the world, how delightful are the sensations we experience should chance throw a friend in our way, one soul truly famed for sympathy, one staff on whom we may confidently repose the weight which oppresses us ! To Rachel, the well known features of Hurstwood, his manly and open address, and his courteous manners, seemed

like old acquaintance, and on meeting again one, who had of late so frequently occupied her thoughts, she felt a joy so lively, and a gratification so complete, that for a considerable time she lost all sense of the extreme delicacy of her situation.

Though her own heart could plainly have told her what an interest the young stranger was securing there, yet she would not listen. Her joy at the meeting was the joy of a friend. She thought that she should have exactly experienced the same had it been Robert Kirkbye, or his mother. Though she certainly had some cause to think that Hurstwood was not indifferent to her, yet it was a moral impossibility that under his circumstances any sentiment but common friendship could have an existence in his bosom. Besides, how very equivocal was her own situation! No ruined man could possibly think of attaching himself to a female little less forlorn than himself.

O no! she might safely indulge her feelings towards her recent friend, and in meeting him on the morrow, she might be enabled either to procure some information elucidatory of recent events, or perhaps contrive some plan to release her from her present thraldom, and allow her to prosecute her original plan of seeking the protection of Lord Norland.

Rachel awoke early in the morning, as if some heavy load pressed upon her mind. Without disturbing the housekeeper, who occupied a small anti-room, she proceeded to a gallery which looked upon the ocean, and throwing open the sturdy casements, admitted the fresh breeze of the morning as she paced her lonely station. All traces of the emotions of the preceding night were gone; reason had resumed its sway; and as she begun calmly to consider her present situation, many perplexities arose to annoy and to disturb her. The unsanctioned nature of her intercourse with young Hurst-

wood — the perturbation of her own feelings when they met — the parting scene at Kilbank — his ardent manner the preceding evening — all these rushed forcibly into her recollection, and though she threw into the scale the peculiar circumstances under which she had laboured, yet she could not reflect without a degree of uneasy consciousness upon the situation in which she was on the point of involving herself — she an unprotected orphan, and he, already an outlaw, and only known to her and his own friends the Kirkbyes, as very probably the last scion of a ruined house.

Rachel was not selfish. Her views of happiness were not limited to nobility, grandeur, or wealth; but she felt that it was due to herself, to the memory of her beloved parents, and to her family, (for she still retained a portion of that horror of unworthy marriages which Lady Anna had early and so industriously instilled,) not to do any thing rash or derogatory,

or of which she might hereafter have cause to repent. Though her present state was far from satisfactory, and though she burnt to receive the sympathy, and listen to the suggestions of Hurstwood, yet she found from the state of her own feelings, that to encourage private interviews would be likely neither to ensure her own peace nor that of her friend.

Accustomed as she was from her very infancy to practise the hard lesson of self-denial, Rachel, when her mind was once fully satisfied as to the propriety of the course she ought to pursue, had sufficient resolution to abide by it, though her heart bled at every pore, and her tears gave evidence of the pain she inflicted upon herself.

Long she reasoned, and bitterly she wept; but still, on regaining her apartment, she sat down with the determination of sending Ruth with a note of apology to Hurstwood, and of carefully avoiding, for the future, all intercourse

but that which necessity warranted. "Yet," thought she, "if ever a conduct slightly deviating from those strict principles of reserve which are natural to our sex, could claim indulgence, and admit of palliation, it would be in the present instance, when an unprotected, persecuted orphan finds that she has no refuge but by trusting to the unsolicited, the unexpected affection of a stranger."

Evening at length drew near. The sun obscured the brilliancy of his setting behind a ridge of mirky clouds, and Rachel repairing to the gallery which looked upon the bay and the darkening waters of the ocean, determined to witness from thence the reception of her note.

She had not stood long ere she perceived a figure slowly pacing the smooth sand, and as he walked frequently turning and casting a long and anxious look alternately to the towering casements of the mansion and the rude and rocky stairs

by which it was approached. Rachel knew her lover, and a deep sigh swelled in her bosom. When she reflected on his situation, desperate and friendless as it was—the interest he had ever manifested in every thing that concerned her—the courageous devotion of his person to her service, though in so perilous a case himself—the romantic and highly interesting fortunes of his noble house—the vicissitudes which had already attended his course—and to crown all, the manly and fascinating graces of his person and his mind, Rachel felt as if she was acting too scrupulous a part; and that there was a degree of ingratitude to him, and of unnecessary punishment to herself, in thus rudely disappointing his wishes and refusing an interview, which she had as readily promised as he had ardently desired.

But it was now too late to alter her determination. Ruth was seen slowly making her way to the appointed spot.

He turned—advanced rapidly a few paces, and then as if surprized and chagrined, cast his eyes upwards towards the mansion, and awaited the approach of the messenger. The note was delivered. He opened it in manifest agitation. As she witnessed this, scarcely could Rachel retain her post. Her heart beat violently. She felt as if she had done wrong, and all the long and secretly cherished feelings of tenderness towards her lover, now overpowered all resistance, and she turned away with streaming eyes and an aching heart.

Fearful of being discovered, and anxious to pour out her grief without danger of interruption, she hastily retreated to her own apartment. Scarcely had she composed herself, and begun the task of reconciling her feelings to an eternal separation from her lover, when the housekeeper returned, and without ceremony entered the room.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL. THE TANJORE

CHAP. II.

RACHEL was afraid to enquire the result of the conference; and Ruth stood so long silent, that her mistress almost begun to suspect that she intended to tantalize her on a topic which she knew to be so interesting. "Well, Ruth, and what are you thinking of?" enquired she at length, unable any longer to remain in ignorance.

"Thinking of! Miss Rachel?" replied the housekeeper. "Why, to be sure it is the oddest thing that ever happened; but whether it blows good or bad, I cannot pretend to say; that was what I was thinking about."

"That," replied Rachel, "what that? How did the gentleman receive my note? What did he say? How did he look? Was he angry?"

"Lord a mercy, ma'am, I was never thinking of the gentleman at that moment. He angry! No, poor soul; he was any thing but angry; he seemed no little concerned, and his face went red and pale, and pale and red, all in the same minute; and then he asked me in such a mild, sorrowful voice, whether you were well, and whether you had things comfortable, and a hundred things else, that I felt as if I loved him for your sake."

"Then did he send no message?" enquired Rachel, her voice trembling with emotion.

"O, yes. He bid me say, how sorry he should be to intrude. He would never be troublesome in any way to Miss Kemyss; but he hoped, before he left the country for ever, that you would allow him to speak one word."

"Where is he now?" asked Rachel, in a hesitating tone.

"On the sands, to be sure, just where I

left him. But I should not advise you, Miss Rachel, to go down, or even to leave your room just now. You may well be wondered; but I can tell you what will wonder you more. As I got to the top of those ugly stone steps, and just rested a while to get my breathing, who should I find there but Master Butler, looking upon the sea through both his hands, as if he saw something. 'Well,' says I, 'sir, and what's a-gate now?' — 'Well,' says he, 'Mistress Ruth, if you will use your old eyes, you may be can spy a boat steering this way.' I looked, and thought I could see a sail. 'What by that?' says I. — 'Only,' says he, 'I should like to know who she belongs to.' And so we stood there, till it came nearer and nearer. At last the old man clapt his hands to his sides, and said, he'd bet a crown it was the Pennington boat, from St. Marions."

"The Pennington boat!" exclaimed

Rachel, in great alarm. "You do not mean that the Penningtons of St. Marions are coming here?"

"I only know what the butler told me," replied Ruth. "He said, he knew the boat as well as if she had been his own."

Ruth, who had been busying herself at the fire, now turned round, but to her surprize found herself alone. The very name of Pennington had raised such a commotion in the breast of Rachel, that without forethought or consideration, she rushed forth, hastily left the house by a side-door, and descending the steps towards the bay, soon found herself actually on the sands. The wind now howled ominously. Its mournful gusts were mingled with the sound of the rudely dashing spray, and the melancholy screams of the sea birds. A few paces, and she was in the presence of Hurstwood.

On seeing before him, so suddenly, a figure so young and so beautiful, with a

countenance so full of terror, an expression which her long locks flowing in rude disorder over her neck and shoulders served to increase, he stepped back, and could almost have fancied himself in the presence of some supernatural being, had not a second glance assured him that he was now in possession of all he held valuable in the list of delights — the presence of her he loved!

With a sudden spring he advanced to meet her, and was about to pour forth his acknowledgements for her condescension, and to half reproach her for the intended breach of her promise, when he was astounded by the following words: —

"Fly — fly this moment, Mr. Hurstwood — fly for your own sake, for mine, or you are lost! The Penningtons are coming — another moment and they will be here!"

Hurstwood, on hearing this, smiled with a composure that perfectly astonished Rachel, and gave her time, in

some measure, to recover the first shock of her surprize and alarm.

"Oh! do not delay," resumed she, after a moment's pause; "I am come purposely to apprize you that the boat is already here. I saw it myself from the gallery windows; it is at this moment on the other side of the promontory! Go, Mr. Hurstwood—fly this instant, let me entreat you!"

"Never!" replied Hurstwood, firmly, "till I know the reason of their coming here. If they seek me, let them come on—I know not why I should fly their vengeance. I am too miserable to feel any desire to avoid the death they meditate. Am I not deserted by all the world? Does not even Miss Kemyss refuse to see me—to confide in me—to listen to my tale of woe! Oh, yes! All that I lived for, neglect me, look coolly upon me.—Let then what will come,—I care not!"

Rachel cast one look at her lover, and read enough in his distracted features

to withdraw her eyes quickly, and cover her face with the folds of the mantle which she had carelessly thrown over her. Aware, however, of the danger to which they were both exposed, and desirous to urge his immediate flight before it was too late, she made another effort, and begged, entreated him, with many tears and exclamations, to leave the place, and not give her the anguish of seeing him led off to certain death before her very eyes. Hurstwood at length taking her hand tenderly, and looking in her face, with eyes full of devoted affection and unalterable love, replied, that on one condition, and one only, would he accede to her request.

"Why should I tell you how I am situated? Time is now too precious to waste with a tale of woe. But yet—one thing I must say. I am wretched—forlorn—an outlaw—deprived of my lawful rights—forsaken by my kindred—hunted down by my species. Yet, all

this I have borne — all this, and a thousand times more I am willing to bear, would Miss Kemyss — would my dear Rachel — Oh! forgive the freedom of the expression—would she deign to smile upon my hopes — to tell me that should I struggle through the tempestuous tide of my fortunes, I might one day be allowed to aspire to her love, and that in the meanwhile, I possessed her prayers — her good wishes — her confidence and regard. This is my condition. Assured of all this, I am for ever obedient to her will."

Rachel hesitated and looked down. Her heart she felt, acknowledged all that he required; yet how should her lips express it? She was silent, but held out her hand. He seized it eagerly, and conveyed it with rapture to his lips. At this moment voices were heard at no great distance, as of people just landed. "Then will you not leave me?" enquired Rachel in great alarm. "Oh fly, fly, if it is for

my sake only! Why will you be so rash as to hazard your life by staying here! While you remain, I dare not, cannot go. I entreat you ——"

"One word, Rachel, and I am gone. In this solemn hour of danger — at this awful moment, when even nature seems to frown upon us — in this lowliness of our destinies, when the cruelty of our own species has nearly driven us to despair — Oh! can you plight your troth to mine — can you give me the blessed assurance, that whatever may befall — still our hearts are indissolubly united in a solemn contract, rendered still more binding by the awful circumstances that accompany it. Yes — yon dark and lowring clouds — these solitary rocks — and those very billows that now, as if in proud derision, cast their spray upon us — these shall either be the witnesses of the free confession of our love — or they shall be the last objects which these weary eyes shall ever look upon. Here will I stand

— this shore shall be dyed with my blood, and while my persecutors triumph over their fallen victim, these howling blasts shall receive my last sigh — my dying prayer for her whom I first and latest loved!"

Again were voices heard. Rachel could forbear no longer. She fell into the arms of Hurstwood — allowed that he was all to her heart — that she relied implicitly on his affection — that with his safety her own happiness was, indeed, but too much implicated, and begged with many tears, that he would that moment fly and show the extent of his regard for her, by preserving a life which, she could not but confess, was now doubly dear to her.

The heart of Hurstwood was too full to speak more. Scarcely could he believe the extent of that happiness which he had had some reason to anticipate. Rachel was in his arms — all external objects vanished — in the extacy of that

interesting moment was all else absorbed, and it was not till Rachel had disengaged herself, and begun again to urge his flight, that he recalled his senses to the exigencies of their situation. He fondly conducted her to the foot of the ascent, and after one parting benediction—one ardent gaze of admiration and love, disappeared behind a jutting angle of the rock.

Rachel ascended a few steps, and paused. Nothing mingled with the wild tumult of wind and ocean. The blast came cold upon her flushed cheek.—The Penningtons! the thought at once filled her imagination;—horror-struck and dismayed, she sprung forward, and stopped not to breathe till she trod the smooth grass of that jutting bank, beneath which Hurstwood had first heard the sound of her footsteps. The wicket door, from whence she had egress to the shore, opened upon this. Secure, therefore, of a retreat, she again paused and listened

anxiously for a repetition of the sounds which they had previously heard. All, however, was silent. She cast her eyes upon the lonely building. It was in unison with the wildness of the scene—dark, frowning, and apparently deserted.

Again she listened, all was still silent.—"Then he is safe!" ejaculated she; and comparatively satisfied, she turned and was about to retreat within the mansion, when the report of fire-arms was distinctly heard at some distance below her.

Rachel felt the blood curdle with horror in her veins. The dreadful probability of her lover's fate rushed upon her imagination. She trembled so excessively, that it was with difficulty that she supported herself. Terror almost deprived her of the use of her limbs, and it was not till after many efforts that she succeeded in reaching her own apartment.

She threw herself upon her couch, and there, in a state better to be conceived

than described, awaited the announcement of some dreadful catastrophe. Hour after hour passed away, but no one broke in upon her solitude. Ruth failed to make her accustomed appearance. There was no light in the room; —even the embers were extinguished. Around her was nothing but pitchy darkness, and without, the storm howled and beat pitilessly. It was almost too much for the harrowed feelings of the unfortunate Rachel! As her eyes vainly endeavoured to pierce through the gloom, fancy conjured up a thousand terrific images—her senses were bewildered—shrieks seemed to fill up each pause of the blast—the clash of arms rung in her ears—voices echoed through the passages, and she sometimes fancied the noise of approaching footsteps. But most of all, the shocking fate of Hurstwood filled her imagination. She beheld him mangled, trampled upon—his eyes glazed, his body stiff, his countenance

pallid and distorted with death! All that he had endured—all the dangers he had escaped—his patience—his fortitude—his magnanimity—these filled her mind, sometimes separately and distinctly—sometimes blended in horrible confusion.

Unable, at length, any longer to sustain the agonizing nature of her feelings, she determined to leave the apartment, and go in quest of some one, who might inform her more accurately of the events of the evening. Her previous knowledge of the various passages enabled her easily, though it was still very dark, to reach the court-yard or quadrangle of the mansion. She stopped beneath the heavy porch that jutted from one side of the building, and led to the spacious offices of the servants. All was still for a few moments, and she was about to proceed to the kitchens, when a loud laugh, and the boisterous sounds of mirth, were heard issuing from that quarter. Alarmed, yet

uncertain how to act, she retained her position. So entirely had her mind been engaged with the supposed fate of Hurstwood, that her own situation, as far as regarded Julius Pennington, had entirely slipped her memory; and it was not till now, that she heard these unaccustomed noises disturbing the wonted silence of the hall, that the idea of her having been brought to the place by the agents of Julius occurred to her mind.

The more she reflected on the past occurrences, the more was she rivetted in this opinion; and she could well account for her having been so long unmolested since his arrival, by the fact of his having met with Hurstwood, and satiated at once his jealousy and his revenge.

How could she so long have been blind to her situation? Oh! that she had accompanied her lover in his flight, and received in her own wretched bosom the fatal blow that was aimed at his life!

To escape from the mansion, and once more throw herself upon the world, was now her first object. With a light step, she hurried across the court, gained the hall, and had barely time to conceal herself amid the gloom of a deep embayed window, ere two persons, whom she now heard approaching, entered by a different door, and stood for a few moments near the only lamp which now faintly illuminated the place.

"Have you secured her, Beechly?" enquired a voice, which Rachel had no difficulty in discovering to be that of Julius.

"Yes, Sir," replied the man. "It was no easy job either, for she screamed and fought like a mad woman. She's the cursedest old hag of a ladyship I ever set my eyes upon. She's safe enough, however, now; and if she's a mind for any more scratching and screaming, she may have it all to herself."

"That's well. Is Reuben come back?"

"No; if I had not seen the young fellow winged myself, I should say that Reuben had met his match. But I saw him fall with my own eyes. The ball struck him as fairly as ball could do. As he fell I could see his eyes start, and he put both hands to his side. But why did not you stay, sir, to see an end of the business?"

"Because," replied Julius, "I have no intention of appearing in the matter, if I can help it."

"And so," said Beechly, laughing, "if any body is to be hanged for the murder, it must be poor Reuben. Well, it's all right. He has done fifty things before this time that would have hanged him, so it's no odds."

At this moment a third person hastily entered the hall, and approaching Julius, informed him that the bodies were found.

"What bodies?" enquired he hastily.

"The young man and Reuben," answered the man.

"Reuben!" exclaimed Julius, in a tone of unfeigned surprize.

"Yes, sir, Reuben. As he did not come to join us in the kitchen with the old butler," replied the man, "we thought we had better go out to look for him. We went straight to the place where we had left him, and there he was upon his back, as stiff as if he had been dead a week, and about two yards distance lay the young man stretched on his face."

"It is very extraordinary!" said Julius, in a tone which conveyed no impression of sorrow at this awful end of his accomplice. "Reuben was an untractable fellow; we must forget him as soon as possible, and do without him as well as we can. It is lucky, however, that he fired the shot. But let us go. See that the bodies are decently disposed of. Menwhile, I have other business to attend to, and will see you all before sunrise."

The men retired, and Julius, after one or two turns across the hall floor, passed close to the place where Rachel now stood, all aghast with horror and scarcely daring to breathe. After muttering a few exclamations of satisfaction, stopping and musing for a moment, he passed rapidly on, and his footsteps died away in the distance.

Rachel, though she now felt almost careless as to what would become of her, yet from an instinctive dread of those horrid scenes which were passing around her, now left her retreat, again crossed the court, and relinquishing her previous intention of going out through the gates, passed unmolested to her own apartment, and from thence made good her escape through the wicket,—descended the steps, and once more found herself pacing those very sands, where so lately she had plighted her affection to one who was now lost to her for ever!

A kind of desperation which, to the eye of an indifferent person, would almost have conveyed the idea of coolness and insensibility, urged her forward. A degree of strange stupefaction overspread her nerves, and she hurried on as chance directed her, guided only by the faint glimpses of awakening day. At length, after following many devious paths, sometimes tracking the wild beach, sometimes ascending the towering heights when the flowings of the tide impeded her progress, she reached a comfortable looking dwelling, and sinking wearied and broken-hearted upon the cold threshold, was quickly insensible to all her woes and all her sufferings.

CHAP. III.

No sooner was Rachel discovered by the inmates of the house, than she was brought in, put to bed, and every means used that kindness and attention could devise to restore lost animation. For several days she continued in a state of high fever, in consequence of all that her mind and body had sustained, and not a word could be elicited from her, explanatory of the strange situation in which she had been found. We will not detain our readers with any detail of the many surmises, conjectures, and suspicions, which haunted the good people of this abode of hospitality, during this mournful period of our poor orphan's history; but passing over the minute description of persons who were merely distinguished from the common mass of their fellow-creatures by the

unadulterated goodness of their hearts, we will hurry forward to events of more interest and importance.

At length Rachel began gradually to recover; but it required all her fortitude and all her sense of religious obligation, to prevent her giving unreasonable vent to the many sorrows which swelled in her bosom. She had been about a fortnight in this situation, when she began to perceive a manifest alteration in the manners of her hostess and the maiden sister, who divided the task of attending and administering to her wants. Before they had been all kindness and civility, but now they blended with them a degree of respect and deference which was almost painful. Every luxury that money could procure was most sedulously supplied to her, and every expedient which could be devised to amuse her, was incessantly resorted to. No curious questions were put, no suspicious or enquiring

looks given; and when Rachel, surprized, demanded the reason of a conduct so unusual, the good people only smiled, and put their fingers upon their lips and bid her be happy.

Alas! she would most willingly have obeyed the injunction had it been in her power! She did not, however, give way to any of those violent bursts of grief which accompanied the first gleam of her awakening recollection. Her sorrows lay heavy upon her heart, and it was only a penetrating observer that could discover the keen anguish of her soul, beneath the calm and resigned expression of her beautiful features.

One morning when she had been so far recovered as to stroll out into the green lane that led from the house to the sea coast, she was surprized on her return to find a splendid equipage at the door. Wondering what this could mean, and fearful of being observed, she turned

back, and had proceeded some distance, when the rapid approach of footsteps caused her to stop.

She looked back, and to her great astonishment beheld a servant in a rich livery hastening after her. As soon as he overtook her, he made a profound reverence, and delivering to her a letter which he held in his hand, retired to a convenient distance while she read it. The epistle was short and eccentric. It ran thus:

"The Earl of Norland requests the company of his niece in London, and has sent a trusty attendant to escort her thither."

Rachel, in great agitation and surprize, dropped the note, and stood for a few moments totally absorbed in the novelty of her situation. "The Earl of Norland!—her uncle—her natural guardian and protector! He *send* for her—invite her under his roof—voluntarily offer that sheltering aid which she

had been so long meditating to implore! It was past belief!—After all her sorrows and persecutions, it was an overpowering reverse! Perhaps fortune was now about to shine upon her with more favouring light. Yet she had other sorrows; those, alas! it was out of the power of fortune to remedy!"

Rachel returned to the house joyful midst her sorrows. She found there a female attendant of the upper sort, who immediately on her appearance, rose, and commenced her routine of services with an alacrity and respectful deference, which convinced Rachel that her uncle, in all his arrangements, intended to make her of as much consequence as possible.

To this she had been so little accustomed at Hurstwood, Lady Anna being at all times anxious to throw every one near her to as low a level as she well could, that it caused her to set out on her proposed journey with brighter hopes and

more comfortable feelings than she might otherwise have done. With many warm acknowledgments to her kind benefactors for their disinterested conduct in so readily receiving her in her distress, and for all other proofs of their goodness, particularly their soothing attentions during her illness, Rachel stepped into the carriage, having first ascertained from the good people themselves, that they had been most munificently rewarded for their expence and trouble, by his lordship's command.

On the evening of the third day, Rachel for the first time in her life beheld the distant smoke of the great metropolis, and soon after entered its bustling and crowded streets. As she rolled along, however, through rows of gay shops, past magnificent squares, and public buildings of splendid architecture and dimensions, her eyes glanced but slightly over them, for her thoughts were busily employed on other subjects. She was taking

a hasty review of the past — wondering how her uncle had discovered her retreat— what reception he would give her ; — what kind of person he would prove, and what was to be her destination after the approaching interview.

At length the carriage stopped at the door of a small, and rather mean-looking house, which stood at the extremity of a quiet street in the neighbourhood of one of the large squares. Rachel was startled. This the residence of the Earl of Norland ? Alas ! how inferior to Hurstwood, with all its beloved haunts ! She entered, and her surprize vanished. Her presence was greeted by a long row of domestics, who stood ready to receive her, many of them clad in the most sumptuous liveries. She was conducted up a staircase of magnificent proportions, through several splendid suites of apartments, till at length the door was closed upon her in a small withdrawing room, partly fitted up as a library, and looking

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down upon an elegant pleasure garden, with a rich view of the country beyond.

Rachel seated herself, and endeavoured for some time to conquer her increasing agitation, by turning her attention to the objects by which she was surrounded. But all her efforts were vain. To the character of her uncle she had been always so accustomed to attach a degree of severity, misanthropy, and sternness, that an irresistible emotion of fear and awe took possession of every faculty, and she felt that to have the dreaded interview once over, would afford her inconceivable relief.

At length she heard a step approaching. An incontrollable agitation shook her whole frame, and with difficulty could she sustain herself on her seat. She feared the presence of Lord Norland, ignorant as she was of the means by which he had discovered her retreat, and totally at a loss to conceive whether he would countenance or reprove the mea-

sures she had been urged to adopt, by the multiplied persecutions at Hurstwood. "How should she be able to exculpate herself, and clear the apparent impropriety of her conduct, without severely reflecting upon the principles of her aunt."

These thoughts would have been followed up by a thousand others equally tending to further alarm and discompose her, had not the opening of the door, and the approach of her uncle interrupted their progress. Rachel, without daring at first to raise her eyes, attempted to rise from her seat, but on his advancing nearer, so as to meet her sight, she gave a faint scream, and sunk back upon the chair. It was the same person, and in the very same costume, whom she had met in the forest of Byewood a few weeks previous! —

Lord Norland perceiving the agitation of his niece, and conjecturing from her pale looks and the weakness of her frame, that she was not yet recovered from the

effects of her late indisposition, tenderly saluted her cheek, and drawing a chair near to her, took her hand in his, and anxiously enquired concerning the state of her health, and the fatigues of her journey. To the poor and persecuted orphan the language of affection and tenderness from such a quarter was immediately and peculiarly reviving. Rachel's heart was full;—she could not speak—but she looked up in her uncle's face, with her eyes full of tears, and the warm expression of gratitude animating every feature.

"I am truly sorry, my dearest girl," said his lordship; "that we have not commenced our intimacy till the present moment. Had I known what I now know, you should long ago have presided as mistress under this roof. I am not blind to conviction; and once, for all, I will own myself wrong in throwing you into so equivocal a situation as you seem to have been exposed to at Hurstwood.

At the time of your poor father's death, I was too deeply engrossed with the affairs of the public, to have leisure to attend properly to the calls of paternal affection, and accordingly I was not sorry to find arguments to support my neglect. But I have numerous questions to ask you, and much both to explain and to have explained; therefore, if my dear niece will allow me to order refreshments here, and is not too much fatigued with her journey, we will pass the evening together."

Rachel acquiesced with pleasure, for she now perceived that there was not the slightest disposition in her noble relative, to blame her for pursuing those desperate measures, to which she knew he was privy. Her heart was overloaded, and she felt that it would afford her great ease to disburden herself freely of her sorrows, and seek for consolation and advice in that quarter from whence she could most properly claim it.

After a few further casual remarks

Lord Norland rung the bell for refreshments, and sending for Rachel's female attendant, desired her to conduct her mistress to the suite of rooms prepared for her reception. They were not large, but they were fitted up with great taste, and commanded the same pleasing view with the room she had just left. "There are larger rooms, my lady," said the maid as they entered; "but his lordship said, he was sure you would prefer these, as you had not been accustomed to look out upon long streets and dead walls." Rachel said, and felt that nothing could be more delightful, and this little instance of attention to her peculiar tastes and habits, pleased her more than the elegantly stocked wardrobe and the splendid ornaments, to which her attendant almost immediately called her attention. After completing her little arrangements, and being duly initiated into the novelties of her new apartment, Rachel, with a pleasure which she had never anticipated

from such a cause, hastened to rejoin her noble relative.

As she entered the room, all loveliness, modesty, and grace, Lord Norland gazed for a moment in all the pride of gratified affection, and then stepping forwards to meet her, seated her close to himself, and endeavoured, by every soothing expression and gratifying attention, to assure her of that paternal interest, the absence of which, he felt, she had but too much reason hitherto to suspect.

It was a consoling interview to Rachel, and would have been doubly delicious, had she not had other sorrows to throw an alloy into her happiness—sorrows of which she dared not to speak, and which it was out of the power even of her present prosperity to alleviate. The affection that makes the slowest, generally makes the surest progress, and the constancy of Rachel's nature, valuable as such a quality is abstractedly, yet in the present moment acted as a considerable

drawback upon her felicity. Her strength of mind, however, enabled her to make great efforts towards apparent tranquillity, and for some time her uncle was deceived into a belief, that the languor and depression which she could not always conceal, were the remains of her recent indisposition.

During their evening tête-a-tête, Lord Norland requested a very minute and unreserved account of all that had passed at Hurstwood. Most attentively did he listen to Rachel's simple and unaffected narrative, only interrupting her when, with tears in her eyes, she was wandering from her subject, in order to find excuses for the open tyranny and iniquity of Lady Anna's conduct. At this he expressed no surprize; but when she came to relate the violent intentions of Julius Pennington, and the causes which compelled her to leave her home in search of a protector and a friend, he was much agitated, and could scarcely conceal his

feelings of angry impatience till she had concluded her recital.

"What I have heard, my dear girl," said his lordship, taking her hand affectionately, "does not so much surprize me, as it condemns the sophistry and selfishness which induced me to place my niece, and the only representative of my family, in such a dangerous situation. I ought to have known sufficiently your aunt's weakness, and the duplicity of the Penningtons, to have ever expected any tolerable results from so near a neighbourhood. I have to thank heaven, however, and your firmness, for preserving you to me untainted with a connection which I should never have recognized or forgiven. My good fortune in meeting you in Byewood forest, was owing to the account given me by a friend, of my sister's conduct towards you, and I was on my way to Hurstwood, with the full intention of demanding an explanation of the treatment you had

experienced, and of taking you out of the reach of so much undeserved persecution."

"Then it was to your house, my dear sir, I was so extraordinarily conveyed, when I thought myself journeying hither?" interrupted Rachel, upon whose mind the truth now flashed.

"It was," replied his lordship. "Ignorant of the cause of your elopement,—fearing lest you had been tempted into some derogatory connection by the hardships of your situation,—certain, from many circumstances, that you were my niece, I deserted the pastime which had already delayed my progress too long, and following you at a distance to your destination, conveyed you for security to an old family seat, and committed you to the care of two trusty domestics. Having ascertained that you had every requisite comfort, I deferred making myself known to you, till I had despatched other business which required immediate attention,

and to this I must attribute the unfortunate alarm to which you were exposed."

"Have you then been at the Hall, sir, since I left it?"

"I was there the day succeeding your escape. I found all in great tribulation. The old woman who accompanied you was quite distracted. On finding that you had left the house they all followed, and it appears, from your account, that they must have taken a wrong direction. On their return they were much abused by young Mr. Pennington's party, and compelled to busy themselves in entertaining these vagabonds; a circumstance which the persons concerned have, I trust, ere this, had occasion to rue. I soon discovered the place of your retreat. The good people were my own tenants, and most sincerely did I congratulate myself, my dear Rachel, that you had fallen into such honest hands. What follows needs no recital. Here you now are, safe—unpolluted—a credit to yourself—wor-

thy of the noble race from which you have sprung, and a fresh stimulus and support to the declining years of an old man, who will not show himself unworthy of your affection and respect."

After a long conversation, the affecting and interesting nature of which caused it to be prolonged to a late hour, Rachel was dismissed to her apartment—but it was long ere she could sleep. So alive was her imagination to all that had passed,—so vivid were the images which impressed it,—so sudden was the change in her prospects and her situation,—that in spite of the fatigues of her journey, and the recent agitation she had undergone, the activity of her mind seemed paramount to the impressions of bodily fatigue.

She breakfasted in her own apartment, and it was not till half the day was over that she received a summons to attend her uncle below. She found him waiting for her on the landing of the great stair-

case. On her approach, after the salutations of the morning, he drew her arm within his, and asking if she had any objection to accompany him in his drive, led the way to the carriage.

"I am going to call upon that kind friend," said his lordship, "through whose means I first became acquainted with your situation. You will have no objection to the introduction, I hope?"

Rachel bowed and wondered. The carriage drove off, and shortly drew up before a large house in an adjoining square. As they entered, she could scarcely conceal an agitation, for which she could assign no cause. They were shown into a large and splendid room; but during the few minutes they sat there together, his lordship gave no hint of what she was to expect, but confined his observations to the morning and the general state of the weather.

Every moment seemed an age, till the introduction of this new acquaintance.

Rachel longed to express her gratitude for the kind offices of the unknown, and when the door opened, and a young man appeared supporting a lady on his arm, both clad in deep mourning, she was ready to step forward, when with a sudden rush the stranger ran to her embrace, and scarcely gave her time, in the pale and interesting countenance before her, to recognize the dearest and best of friends — Mrs. Kirkbye!

Abundant were the congratulations on one side, and the condolences on the other, which followed this meeting, equally unanticipated by both parties. Mrs. Kirkbye, with a solicitude truly maternal, saw in the altered looks of her protegée, all her previous fears and anxieties realized; while her son, with his usual frankness, began to blame the solitude and diet of Hurstwood, and to congratulate his fair friend upon her arrival in a scene which would soon bring back

the roses to her cheeks, by its liveliness and its novelty.

"Come. Robert," said Lord Norland, "you must allow me to claim your company this morning. I have news to tell you, and business for you to attend to, which will be a sufficient excuse to the ladies for our absence. Besides, if I may draw an inference from circumstances, I think they had rather be without us."

"Your lordship will dine with us, I hope?" enquired Mrs. Kirkbye, anxiously.

"If you wish it, certainly," was the answer, and the gentlemen departed.

Those who have known what it is to suffer, without the power of complaint—to endure, without the encouraging voice of sympathy—to act under difficult emergencies, without the assistance of advice from superior experience,—can well divine the pleasing emotions which took

possession of the breast of Rachel, when she once more found herself alone with her earliest — her best — her kindest friend. She felt that greatest of luxuries, the inclination and the power to withdraw the veil of concealment from her heart, — to tell all the history of the past, and the connection it had with the strongest affections of her nature.

They had but little time, however, on the present occasion, to indulge in what they equally wished, — a relation of past events, for in about an hour the gentlemen were announced, and they entered the room accompanied by a stranger. He was past the middle age — tall and thin, — somewhat formal in his address, but it was the formality of high breeding. He was welcomed with great cordiality and respect by Mrs. Kirkbye, and Rachel was beginning to wonder who it could be, when her uncle brought him forward, and introduced the "Count de Ruse."

Her colour went — a dimness seemed to overspread her eyes, and mechanically only did she return his polite salutation. The father of her lover! — The surprize was too sudden; — she felt as if she had betrayed herself. Mrs. Kirkbye, who luckily observed her emotion, immediately interfered in her favour, and shrewdly guessing the cause of her young friend's agitation, withdrew the Count to a different part of the room, till she had time to recover herself.

Amid all her distresses, Rachel had never experienced a more uncomfortable few hours than intervened between this new introduction and the time of her return home. It was not only that the sight of the Count brought back very sensibly a thousand painful recollections, but she found ere she had been half an hour in his company, that so far from being aware of the fate of his son, he was at that moment buoying himself up with hopes and expectations with regard to

him, which, alas! she knew could and would never be realized.

The gentlemen talked much of Harry's prospects being so brilliant, in case the government could be softened in his favour; and Lord Norland, with great exultation, mentioned the defection of Braythwaite from his former patron Mr. Pennington, in consequence of the haughty conduct of Julius, and his duplicity towards his daughter. The title deeds of his estates had that morning been delivered up to the Count de Ruse, and an action instituted against the family at St. Marions, for the mal-appropriation of the surplus proceeds.

"If we can but get Harry to Hurstwood," said Robert, with much animation, and at the same time glancing slily at Rachel, "I shall not have another wish in the world, that is not likely to follow in the train of that most desirable event."

All this spoke daggers to the feelings of poor Rachel. Pity, the most generous pity, filled her breast. She saw in prospect all the anguish which was impending — yet she had no power to avert it. She felt too deeply her own loss to venture to communicate it to others, and she was obliged to sit still, listening to subjects which were gall and bitterness to her, and enduring the allusions of Robert Kirkbye, which distressed her exceedingly, and almost overpowered her little remaining stock of fortitude.

At length, to her incalculable relief, the party broke up. Lord Norland was taking the arm of his niece, when the Count de Ruse stepped suddenly forward, and claimed the privilege.

" You know my son, Miss Kemyss," said he, in a low voice, as he handed her to the carriage, " and, believe me, I am proud to hear it. For past acquaintance sake, I hope you will allow his old father

to cultivate the intimacy in his absence. I shall call upon you at an early opportunity, and tax your indulgence."

Rachel bowed, stepped into the carriage, and was not sorry to give way to emotions so long and so painfully suppressed, during the few minutes that her uncle remained behind with Mrs. Kirkbye, settling the arrangements of the ensuing day.

After the lapse of a few days, Lord Norland had completely settled his niece as the head of his establishment, and after giving her to understand that he should consider her in the light of a daughter, so long as her conduct and her perfect obedience to his wishes should render her worthy of the distinction, he resumed that frigid and sarcastic exterior, which, though now grown natural to him, was much at variance with his inward thoughts and dispositions.

He was a man who delighted in being kind and good, yet had a particular

objection to the appearance of it; and he was wont to assume a greater indifference of manner towards his friends, in proportion to the anxious exertions he was silently making to promote their happiness. Many were offended with this peculiarity, and attributed it to a wrong motive; but Rachel had the good sense to discriminate between appearances and reality; and if she did not, on all occasions, find in her uncle the outward display of strong affections, yet she judged of the heart by the conduct, and was more than satisfied with her situation.

Unfortunately for Rachel, her friend, Mrs. Kirkbye, was called into the country a few days after her own arrival in the metropolis, and she was obliged to see her depart, without having had any opportunity of giving more than a mere outline of the events which had occurred. The sad account of young Hurstwood's fate, and the very prominent part he had acted in her own history, she reserved

for one of those secluded interviews, which she daily hoped to bring about; but it unfortunately happened that no such opportunity occurred, previous to her parting with her friend.

Lord Norland had been wanting in observation, had the extreme dejection of his niece, which she was not at all times able to conceal, escaped his notice. Unable to divine the cause, he very naturally concluded that her spirit had been broken down by the late trials to which she had been exposed; and that her health, and the vivacity usual to her age and condition, would be speedily restored, when she was made fully aware of the many advantages of her situation.

Though no general admirer of the fair sex, and habitually inclined rather to ridicule and be severe upon their foibles —yet he had ever a few exceptions, and Rachel was fast rising to a superiority in his opinion over all. He was proud of the native elegance of her person and

manner, and delighted to contrast them with the less natural and laboured attractions of the beauties of the court—he loved the simple pathos of her language, and the unaffected display of the noble feelings of her heart—he admired the dignity, yet retiring modesty of her movements, and took a secret pleasure in drawing forth that mine of intellectual and moral excellence, which he soon discovered her to possess.

Rachel had not been a week in town before her table was covered with invitations, and a multitude pressed forwards eager for her society, and professing a great desire for her friendship. She applied to her uncle, who answered, that it was his wish that she should go out into the world; that a particular friend of his, a Lady Allonby, had consented to chaperone her during the absence of Mrs. Kirkbye, but that he should himself attend her progress in the gay world, and endeavour as far as possible to prevent

any wrong bias taking possession of her mind, from the dangerous influence of fashion.

Like many, very many before her, Rachel entered upon the monotonous scenes of gay life with but little relish, and soon applied for leave to retire, with a sickened heart. Known and acknowledged in the world as the heiress of large possessions, of high rank and unusual attractions, she was followed and courted by the gay and distinguished of both sexes; and had she possessed ambition sufficient to come forward, she had it in her power to have outrivalled the most distinguished leaders of the ton. But Rachel had sorrows of no trivial nature, and the unceasing attentions paid to her by many young men of rank and fashion, while they excited the envy of her rivals, and called forth the congratulations of her friends, afforded to her little else than tedium and annoyance.

The Count De Ruse, who frequently

attended her in public, and sometimes even supplied the place of Lord Norland, when necessity compelled the latter to be absent, marked all this indifference with astonishment, and felt daily more and more convinced, that if her heart was not in her brilliant prospects, it must be engaged elsewhere. He did not, however, venture to hazard a conjecture on the subject; but anxious for the pleasure of her society, and perceiving, from the great respect and attention which she paid to him, that his presence was no intrusion, he contrived to spend every vacant evening at the house of his friend.

This was to Rachel an acknowledged fund of consolation and comfort. She delighted to rest awhile from the frivolities of fashion, and enjoy the high intellectual treat which the society of two men so highly gifted afforded to her; and while from her uncle she frequently gained much useful information on literary and scientific subjects, from the

Count she derived an insight into the human character, and acquired those correct views of things, which his extensive experience, and the vicissitudes of his fortunes, enabled him so correctly to communicate.

CHAP. IV.

It not unfrequently happened that the subject of his son's situation was mentioned by the Count De Ruse, and with dismay Rachel still found that he was unacquainted with the dreadful catastrophe which she had almost witnessed. On these occasions the most uncomfortable sensations were wont to agitate her, and she felt as if guilty of a crime in not declaring all she knew upon the subject.

The character of Lord Norland, however, was generally so reserved, and his morality was of so severe a cast, that Rachel was always deterred from the attempt, even when her mind had been made up on the subject, and her lips in the very act of giving utterance to her story. Yet in all that had passed, she could not rea-

sonably blame herself. Her only crime was, that she loved — tenderly loved; and if the object had been buffetted by fortune, still no disgrace could attach in the slightest degree either to his actions or to his motives.

From the many consultations on the subject between the unhappy father and Lord Norland, Rachel found, that in spite of the most diligent search nothing had been heard of young Hurstwood since he had left Kilbank, and that while his fate was unknown, numerous conjectures were hazarded as to his motions and destination. She heard, likewise, that strong interest had been used at court, but hitherto without success, to procure a free pardon for the conspicuous part he had acted in the rebellion; and this consideration tended somewhat to reconcile her to past events, for it would have been doubly galling to her lover and his friends, had he been dragged before a public tribunal, and exposed to

all the aggravated horrors of a public execution.

Several months had now glided away, and Rachel, in order to divert her thoughts from the melancholy retrospect of past events, employed the hours which were not devoted to company, to the active cultivation of those acquirements, her taste for which had been in less fortunate days so kindly fostered by Mrs. Kirkbye. Amid the variety of eminent characters to whom she was introduced by her uncle, she had an opportunity of enlarging her mind rarely afforded to, and we may add, seldom duly appreciated by, one of her years and station. Still her humility seemed to increase as her understanding enlarged, and while her beauty and talents challenged universal admiration, the unaffected graces of her manner commanded general esteem.

Though thus constantly occupied, yet Rachel's affectionate heart would sometimes revert to the probable situation of

Lady Anna, with feelings of unfeigned pity and commiseration. She knew how much her aunt was wrapped up in visions of fancied importance; how necessary to her was the semblance of style, however ridiculous, and the appearance of arbitrary power, however absurd; and she trembled to think, that perhaps at this very moment she was exposed to the unfeeling insults and ungenerous persecution of that very man to whom she would have sacrificed every better principle, and betrayed the happiness of an unprotected orphan. Often did she wish to enquire the fate of this misguided relative, and once did she venture to sound Lord Norland on the subject; but a short and irrelevant answer, accompanied with something resembling a frown, convinced her that she was treading on forbidden ground.

The winter was now fast approaching, and severe frosts already begun to suc-

ceed the fogs and blasts of November. One evening as Rachel was sitting with her uncle and the Count, reading aloud to them extracts from some modern publication, the servant in attendance delilivered a note, at the same time informing her, that a person waited in the small parlour which adjoined the hall. Rachel read the note, and found that her caller was from Kilbank. She immediately descended, and found the confidential servant to whom the secret of young Hurstwood's concealment had been entrusted, waiting for her.

"I took the liberty, Miss Kemyss," said he, "of requesting your presence alone, because it was the wish of my mistress that I should have an opportunity of answering such questions about the state of our neighbourhood as you might feel disposed to make. I am to assure you, likewise, that all is well at Kilbank, and to deliver you this packet

of letters, which you will find to contain some from my young master to his lordship."

Rachel, scarcely knowing what she did, wishing to enquire of many things, yet not daring to begin, rapidly commenced an inspection of the packet. The man, supposing from this that she had no further commands, was about to withdraw, when she turned round, discontinued her occupation, and made many rapid enquiries concerning her friends.

"Mr. Robert—that is, Mr. Kirkbye, as he is now called," replied the man, "never looked better. His father was a kind gentleman in his way, and very fond of his son; but he was over particular sometimes. I speak it with reverence, ma—am, for he was a good man and an excellent master. All is very quiet now at Kilbank. Mistress never leaves the house, and though my master, from some occasion or other, gallops a good deal

up and down the country, he never sees company, either abroad or at home. When the mourning is ended, Sir —— intends coming down, and I heard it whispered, that he is bringing a fair lady with him—a new mistress for the Hall, I suppose, and that my lady is going to live on her own land at Netherstead."

"That is the house on the river side, below Hurstwood?" enquired Rachel, with a deep sigh.

"The same, ma—am," replied the man. "She has a sweet little estate there; and I am sure will miss you greatly from Hurstwood."

"Hurstwood, I suppose, is much changed? I suppose, now that no one resides there, it is quite going to ruin?"

"It is changed indeed, ma—am, but not in the way that you suppose. You know of course what has become of those Penningtons?"

"Oh no," replied Rachel, turning

deadly pale; "I am not in the way here to know any thing that passes in the country. They are well, I hope. They were friends of my aunt's for many years."

"Pretty friends, indeed, Miss Kemyss, if the tale goes true. But it is no use my telling what you and his lordship must know already. But about these Penningtons—you must know there was some strange work, and a great deal of underhand dealing and mystery about the Hurstwood estate, at the time that its owner left it, and moreover there was a report spread that Mr. Hurstwood and his son were drowned at sea, and so these Penningtons of St. Marions came forward, backed by Mr. Braythwaite, the agent, and took possession, and used it all as their own. Now there was some sort of a quarrel about Braythwaite's daughter, and as Providence would have it, to punish a long course of ill deeds, Mr. Hurstwood, at the end of twenty years

or so, comes back again with a foreign title, and puts in an unexpected claim for his son, and up goes Braythwaite to London with the deeds, and does all in his power to make up for old offences, and get into favour with the new lord. But you know it all as well as myself, Miss Rachel, and so I will go on to what happened since you left us. Well—down come a host of lawyers, and officers, and accountants, and your noble uncle, and Mr. Robert, my young master, with them; and there was such a turn out at St. Marions as has not been remembered time out of mind. Oh that you had seen what a poor daunted creature the old man was, and you would have said, as many did that stood by, that honesty is surely the best policy. And then his son, Mr. Julius—he was like a mad creature. He curst and he swore—he upbraided and he threatened; and he uttered so many abusive and dreadful things against his father and Braythwaite, and seemed so

certain in his own mind that he had a dreadful revenge in his power, that his lordship took him into custody there and then, and had him kept up for near a week, till he apologized, and promised to be more peaceable."

"How very shocking!" ejaculated Rachel, while in all this she could clearly perceive the finger of an all-disposing Providence.

"It was shocking, indeed," continued the man; "and a pretty uproar it all made in the country, I warrant you, ma—am. At last, there was a public sale of the house and lands and furniture of St. Marions; for it happened that the scales were turned, and on a legal inspection of the accounts, it was found that the Penningtons owed twice what they had in the whole world to Mr. Hurstwood, by way of arrears due from the surplus of the estates. All the country went, determined to make a brave sale, for they were all fond of the old family, and wished them to have their own back

again. At every bid, nothing was heard but 'long live Hurstwood;' and at last there was a general cry to know where the young heir was, and when he was coming amongst them. — But you look ill, Miss Rachel — let me step for a glass of water."

Rachel gladly acquiesced in the proposal, for she was really ill. The inward distress which she experienced at this narration, exceeded even her own expectations; and though resolved to hear it out, she was not sorry at the short interval which thus offered itself for the more effectual fortifying of her feelings. When the man returned, she begged him, with some degree of composure, to resume his narrative, which he did as follows: —

"I left off where the crowd began to call for young Hurstwood. — Mr. Julius was present, and there he stood next to the auctioneer, with his arms folded, and such a stern and bad look on his face,

that would almost have made any body tremble; and I often wondered at the folks there, that they dared to make such noise, and say so many disrespectful things of him and his family. He took no notice, however, till they begun to call for young Harry Hurstwood; and then, when they had almost done shouting, and there was an opportunity of being heard, he stepped forward, and looking first at the crowd, and then at his lordship and my young master, he said with a loud voice, very slowly and distinctly, and with such a sneer of contempt, 'Fools that you are, to be standing gaping here for what you shall never have. When Harry Hurstwood returns, he will need but one bell, and that will toll his funeral. Mark my words. Upon his head and upon his father's be the work of this day.' I believe these were his exact words, and it was quite awful the silence that succeeded them. I saw his lordship was much affected,

and my master turned as pale as death. After this, I do not know how it was, all seemed flat, as if there was really some bad news; and on their return to Kilbank, my Lord Norland had a long private conference with Mr. Robert, who set off the next morning, and did not return for a week."

"Then what has become of the Penningtons, since they have been obliged to quit St. Marions?" enquired Rachel, anxious to turn the subject.

"The old gentleman, I believe, is in prison, and his lady has taken lodgings to be near him. Mr. Julius is at liberty; for they say he is in no way responsible for the debts, and indeed he has not a farthing to pay with, for he has been strangely proud and extravagant, and one cause, as they say, of his father's ruin. Hurstwood is now in the hands of a new steward, one Mr. Firmly, from the other side of the water, a recommend of his lordship's, for he has lived a

number of years on his estate at Cove-court Royal. Oh Miss Rachel! what an alteration is there at the old house. Lady Anna was not very particular about any thing but the great drawing-room and the hall, as you know; but now the whole domain has been cleared—every thing has been thoroughly repaired, and nothing is now wanting but some new furniture in the mansion, and a thinning of the timber of the park, to make it the finest and prettiest place in England. It beats Kilbank out and out, which my young master always allows, when he sees it standing so grand and so proud, with its old wood behind, and the river in front, as we have been riding to Netherstead to look after the alterations."

"But what did you mean," asked Rachel, interrupting a description that thrilled to her very heart, "by saying that the Penningtons had turned out such bad friends to my aunt?"

"Excuse me, Miss Rachel," answered the man, "I did not say positively that they have turned out bad friends, I was only going to tell you what the report was in the country about them. That old vagabond, Paul, that lives at the ferry-house, as soon as he saw how it was going with these Penningtons, comes straight to my master, as being a justice of the peace, and lays an information, as how, that he was gone down to shore on business of his own one night, and he believes it was the very night before the Lady Anna was missed ——"

"Missed! Then it is true my poor aunt was forced away, and it must have been her that—" Rachel stopped, fearful of committing herself, and hastily motioned the man to proceed.

"Paul said, that as he was waiting on the shore he heard voices proceeding from Reuben's hut, and wondering what they could mean at such a time of night, he approached a boat that lay on the sand,

and concealed himself where he could hear what passed. Well—three men came down, and with them a lady, who, as they put her into the boat, screamed and resisted, and once he heard her fairly plunge overboard, but they took her out of the water, and tied her down at the stern. The voices were loud and angry, and they seemed to have no pity; and he swore positively that Mr. Julius was one, for he was loudest and most violent of them all. After they pushed off he heard no more of them, and returned to the ferry-house, wondering what it could all mean. Next morning, as nearly as I can guess, Lady Anna was missing—and Reuben, from whose cottage the lady seemed to come, has never been seen since. Master took all this down in writing, and sent it to my Lord Norland; but what notice has been taken of it, or what has befallen her ladyship, nobody knows but those concerned."

"But what account did John Drew give? Was he not at Hurstwood that night when his mistress left it?"

"No, indeed. After you were gone with old Ruth, he took matters so to heart, that he would stay no longer, so that Lady Anna was obliged to hire a woman from St. Marion's, and get a neighbouring man to attend to the out-door work; and in my opinion, both of them were concerned in this black business, though nothing could be got in any shape from either of them."

"And where is young Mr. Pennington, now?

"No one seems to know; and mistress hopes he has left the country, for she is very fearful of a meeting between him and Mr. Robert, on account of what passed at the sale. I do not fear much myself, however; for I know if it comes to blows who will be the better man."

After some further conversation, the servant was dismissed; and Rachel, feeling unequal to join the gentlemen, retired immediately to her own room. There she thought over all she had heard, only to be convinced how little room there was for her to hope.

The perpetual recurrence of these painful scenes had at length so perceptible an influence on the appearance and spirits of his niece, that Lord Norland resolved to remove for a few months to a pleasant villa which he possessed on the coast of Wales, in order to try what beneficial effects might result from retirement and a change of air. In order to make this excursion the more pleasant, he strongly solicited the Count de Ruse to make one of the party. He excused himself, however, saying, sorrowfully, "that till he had found his son, and obtained his pardon from the government, he must deny himself every other pleasure, but the melancholy one of indulging

hopes, which were perhaps never to be realized."

Rachel sighed deeply, and was silent; while Lord Norland endeavoured to speak comfort to his friend, by assuring him, that during their progress through the country, no exertions should be spared by him to discover the fugitive's retreat, and assist him in his escape from the kingdom, if it was prudent to make the attempt.

The Count replied, " that so many and such active emissaries having as yet failed to trace his son's route, he scarcely dared to hope that a mere traveller through the country would be so fortunate as to succeed. However, he would hope for the best, and requested his lordship to send him daily reports of his progress.

CHAP. V.

RACHEL having taken leave of her good friend, Lady Allonby, who was one of those kind-hearted beings who love all mankind too much to be ardently attached to any particular person, and having received from her a reasonable number of cautions, recipes, &c. as indispensible travelling companions, she acquainted her uncle with her readiness to depart, and the carriage was accordingly ordered to be at the door early the ensuing morning.

In the prospect of this journey, hopeless as reflection convinced her that it was, yet Rachel felt an indescribable sensation of comfort. Lord Norland having informed her that he should not take the direct route, but travel from town to town as inclination prompted

him, she considered the journey as a kind of pilgrimage, dedicated to the memory of him she loved; and hope would even sometimes whisper, in spite of her reason, that, as she was not the *eye-witness* of young Hurstwood's fate, perhaps something unexpected might turn up, and the constancy of her affection might be finally rewarded.

When they met at an early breakfast, Lord Norland could not help observing an alteration for the better in her looks, and he began to regret that he had not tried this expedient earlier.

" I perceive, Rachel," said he, smiling, as he handed her to the carriage, " that you are no votary of the town and its crowded gaieties. You are too sensitive a plant to endure so sudden a change as you have experienced; and I cannot but remark, that the very prospect of being transplanted into your former soil, seems to revive and stimulate you."

" Oh, no — my dear uncle," replied she, " I am not quite the being you take me for. I can be happy under any circumstances, either of retirement or gaiety. Yet I must own that our journey, though undertaken at so inclement a season, is any thing but disagreeable to me."

" What! and leaving the count too?"

" Alas! I pity him too sincerely," replied Rachel, blushing, " not willingly to forego the pleasure of his society, if by our absence we can be of any service in the cause nearest to his heart."

" You are a good girl, Rachel, and may heaven bless you!" was the concluding sentence of his lordship, as they drove off, and rapidly left the as yet silent streets of the great city.

For several days they travelled towards the west by easy stages, and at length, the weather being remarkably open and fine for the season, they rested at Gloucester, in which neighbourhood Lord

Norland had several highly valued friends. During their stay in that very interesting city, every enquiry was set on foot that prudence could warrant to discover the fate of Harry Hurstwood, and repeatedly did Lord Norland declare it to be his intention not to leave the west, till he he had at least advanced some way in his object. At these times, Rachel felt it almost imperative upon her to mention what she knew,—but she was withheld by certain feelings, which, while she indulged, she could not but condemn. The uncertainty too, which in fact clouded the events of the past, determined her at least to wait till some circumstance might occur to throw further light upon them, and she felt but little doubt in her own mind, that if young Hurstwood was really dead, it would in a short time come to the knowledge of his friends, without the necessity of her stepping forward and making known an attachment which, under her circum-

stances, had perhaps far better be buried in the grave of her lover.

After remaining for some time in Gloucester, and having been formally introduced by Lord Norland to his distinguished friends in that part of the country, Rachel heard with pleasure that they were to prosecute their journey without any further delays, and that the principal town of an adjoining county was to be their resting place on the ensuing evening.

On leaving the city and crossing that long causeway which extends through the meads and the isle of Alney, the sun shone gloriously upon our travellers; but scarcely had they reached that narrow defile which admitted them into the gloomy but romantic districts of Dean Forest and the Wye, than Winter,

> " Sullen and sad, with all his rising train,
> " Vapours, and clouds, and storms,"

seemed at once to beset them, and at length they were glad to escape the thick

descending snow, by taking a temporary refuge in a small inn which stood by the road-side at the foot of an abrupt descent.

Here Lord Norland ordered such simple refeshment as the remoteness and poverty of the place afforded; and as he travelled with his own horses, he left Rachel in the large room of the inn by herself, while he went to regulate matters concerning the remainder of their day's journey—it being over a hilly, and in those days an almost inaccessible country.

He was absent nearly an hour, and on returning to his niece, was no little astonished to find her standing at the casement, pale—disordered—trembling as she stood,—and evidently in great agitation and alarm. Expressing his surprize at this sudden alteration of manner and appearance, and beginning anxiously to enquire the cause, Rachel made many efforts towards recomposure—but finding them vain, burst into tears,

and complained of sudden indisposition. Twice or three times did his lordship pace the room in silence—at length approaching the place where she sat, he thus accosted her in a firm and decisive tone. "You must suppose me blind, Rachel, not to have perceived in you the existence of great occasional depression. The strangeness of your present manner recalling other coincidences to my recollection, naturally leads me to the conclusion that there is a something existing, yet untold,—some secret sorrow that draws largely from your cup of bliss, and embitters even the very possession of those advantages of fortune and of station for which so many toil and sigh in vain. I will not use that just authority which I possess as your nearest earthly relative, nor will I put in the few claims I have on the score of gratitude, to extort your secret from you; but I appeal to your own good sense, whether any thing should be concealed from me,

which, by seriously affecting your happiness and comfort, so materially reflects upon mine."

Rachel heard this appeal with sensasations of sorrow and dismay. How bitterly did she now regret the false delicacy which had prompted her to concealment for so long! yet at the present moment she had not composure sufficient to collect her ideas, and exercise her judgment. The past, the present, and the future crowded upon her memory, and distracted her brain. What she had just seen, and what she had just heard, were however uppermost in her thoughts, and the consciousness of having betrayed the treasured secret of her heart at the very moment when a little coolness might have buried it for ever, filled her with embarrassment and confusion. Could she but in this instance have commanded her feelings, and displayed no more than a common interest in what she had just witnessed, — all, as far as she was con-

cerned, had been well;—but now she had the mortification before her of discovering the rise and growth of an attachment as romantic in its commencement and progress as it was unfortunate in its termination.

Conscious that she deserved the disapprobation of her uncle for allowing the addresses of a young man of such desperate fortunes as Harry Hurstwood, —fearful of his displeasure—and shrinking from a task that suffused her cheeks with burning blushes, and filled her downcast eyes with tears—yet inwardly firm in the maintenance of a generous and ardent attachment,—Rachel threw herself with a sudden impulse at her uncle's feet, and entreated his indulgence while she told him all she knew and all she felt.

The kind and affectionate yet silent manner of Lord Norland somewhat reassured her, and she felt the justice of his withholding any premature expres-

sions of comfort till he knew what claim she had to his approbation. Once begun, the task was half over—and as with all the artless pathos of her character, she detailed to her uncle the affecting particulars concerning the young rebel and the progress of their acquaintance and ulterior attachment, she was inconceivably consoled and gratified to feel the warm tear of sympathy fall upon her hand, as he gently raised and pressed it to his bosom. Having without the last prevarication mentioned all that had passed even to the dreadful night at Cove-court Royal, when she imagined that her lover had fallen a sacrifice to his rival, she proceeded to explain the cause of her late perturbation and alarm.

As she was sitting at the window, which was immediately over the porch, and jutted out so considerably as to command a full view of the road and the court below, her attention was arrested

by the rapid approach of a cavalcade, consisting of six persons on horseback, descending the hill. In a few moments they reached the inn, but without dismounting, they called for some refreshment and a little hay for their horses, saying, that they must move on immediately.

Rachel amused with a scene so picturesque, for five wore the dress and habiliments of troopers, and their scarlet cloaks formed a lively contrast to the snowy covering of the surrounding objects, examined the party more narrowly, and without much difficulty perceived, that one of the number, who was stationed in the midst, and differed from the rest by the plainness of his dress, was a prisoner, in the act, no doubt, of being escorted to some neighbouring dungeon.

Pity for his situation now took possession of every feeling, and she listened eagerly for some expression from his

guards, which would inform her of the nature of his offence. In vain she attempted to obtain a view of his countenance. He was now stationed immediatly below her, and a tattered cloak wrapped around him, and a large slouched hat upon his head, effectually concealed his person.

After a pause of a few moments the landlady herself came out, and remarking to her customers how thick the snow fell, and in what large flakes, begged of them to come in, and bring their prisoner with them. "I can tell you, Mr. Sargeant," continued she, addressing the leader of the party, "it is not one draught or two draughts that will thaw your stomachs such a cold day as this, and so you may as well get down and let Jack Ostler feed your nags, while you come in a bit, and drink your warm beer by the fire-side."

The sergeant, after a little more pressing, being a gallant man, and one who

thought it his duty to submit to the ladies in all things reasonable, so far acceded to the good woman's request that he and two others dismounted, leaving the remaining two without in charge of the prisoner, with a promise speedily to replace them.

On their leaving, the ostler, a merry sort of gentleman, as many in his station are, constant work being, as it is said, a constant source of good spirits, began to talk with the troopers, sometimes asking them questions, and sometimes rallying them upon the probable wetting their gay accoutrements were about to sustain. At length he turned to the prisoner, remarking to his guards, that "it must be a silly bird to be caught by their bird-lime," insinuating, no doubt, that a tolerable pair of legs, such as his own for instance, would have a good chance against such corpulent riders and such sorry steeds.

The men bore these jibes with apparent good-humour, one merely remarking,

" that they had nothing to do with either the catching or the trial of their prisoner; and they hoped they would have nothing to do with the execution."

" Then the poor fellow is going to M—— to be hanged?" enquired the ostler in a tone of compassion.

" He is either to be hanged, drowned, or beheaded to-morrow noon," replied the man, with a degree of sangfroid which made Rachel's blood run cold.

" And pray what for?" said the ostler. " For nothing, I dare swear; for now-a-days to be honest and to be hanged are one and the same thing. If he's a Charlie's lad, and going to suffer for fighting on that side, though I am loyal enough myself to these new folk, yet I'd give a silver groat out of my own pocket, and that's poor enough, to see him on the other side of that hedge with a loose leg and a bold heart."

" Hold your tongue, Mr. John Ostler," said one of the men crossly, " and keep

it fast between your teeth, or it will be worse for you. And look to your horses do you see—for one has got loose, and will be up the road in a minute."

John silently caught the stray horse, and happening to look up, perceived Rachel, who made a motion for him to come under the window.

"I would thank you, my good man," said she "to enquire of the prisoner who he is; and if my uncle, Lord Norland, who is staying here with me, can be of any service to him. If he can, only let him speak and every thing will be done."

"I will, my lady," said the ostler bowing, and was about to deliver the message, but was anticipated by the prisoner,—who hearing the voice, turned sharply round and raised his eyes for a moment to the casement. The next instant saw him turn hastily away—with a sudden start he buried his face in his cloak, and brought his horse almost within the porch, as if anxious to escape any further

observation. But a loud shriek from above convinced him that concealment was now vain. Rachel had caught that glance, and in the prisoner whose fate she had been pitying — in the wild eye and haggard look which she now gazed upon, she recognized beyond all possibility of mistake — Harry Hurstwood himself! — him, whom she had given up as lost — her lover and her friend!

A scuffle below followed this discovery; but Rachel was too much overcome to be conscious of any thing but a confused noise of voices; and when some little recovered she rang the bell violently, and sent for Lord Norland; she had reached the window again at the moment of his entry, and found all gone — but leaving an impression of inexpressible horror, like some dreadful vision of the night.

To Rachel's story Lord Norland listened in profound silence, and when she had concluded, which she did with a

fearful and a modest appeal to his humanity — an appeal, which a moment after she confessed to herself to be needless, he merely begged her to compose herself while he went out for a few moments to make further enquiries.

He returned sorrowful, and the quick eye of love soon penetrated into his thoughts. Rachel saw that he had no hope.

"My dear Rachel," said his lordship, in a voice of the utmost tenderness and compassion, "while I cannot refrain from expressing my surprize at what you have told me, I must do you the justice to say, that I cannot blame you for any thing that is past. That you, at that time young and inexperienced, neglected by one friend and tyrannized over by another, should be won by the attentions of a handsome young man, of elegant manners and of superior mind, and who, as fate would have it, stood unavoidably connected with you in a series of misfor-

tunes and persecutions, which necessarily tended to unite generous souls in a firmer alliance,—that you, thus circumstanced, should yield to a noble and generous, though perhaps somewhat imprudent, attachment, on due consideration, neither excites my surprize, nor merits my reproof.—I am truly happy that your choice does so much honour to yourself, and to the unfortunate young man whose case we must now consider. If I was prepared to esteem him for the sake of his excellent father, and admire him for the brilliant though mis-directed qualities he has displayed, I now am prepared to love him, as the man chosen as the partner of her destinies by my dear niece, and this adds to my affliction, in the little hope I can give you of any intercession of mine being available in his present desperate situation. Unceasing prayers have been offered at the feet of royalty—the government has been influenced and importuned in every possible way for a

pardon, but without effect, and I much fear that any sudden interruption of mine to the ordinary course of justice, would have no other effect than that of drawing down some severe punishment upon my own head, and thus reducing my power of benefiting others. We will hasten forward to M——. I will do all that I can, by entreaty, to influence the authorities to put off the execution of the penalty of high treason; and if that can be accomplished, of which, alas! I have scarcely the smallest hope, we will try what one more appeal to the mercy of the government can do in favour of our unfortunate friend. I do not know that in my whole life I have any parallel to the deep affliction which I suffer, from the disclosures and events of this day."

His lordship ceased, and a long and painful pause ensued. Even Rachel's mild and benevolent spirit was up in arms. She felt a something, after the first burst of grief and surprize, like ela-

tion in the consciousness that her lover was yet alive; for, like many others in a similar situation, she could not divest herself of the idea, that while there was life there was hope.

Yet what was to be done? Even Lord Norland had declared the case beyond his controul—he viewed it too manifestly as hopeless. How had Hurstwood escaped the fate which threatened him at their last meeting? How had he been again captured, and by whom, were questions which now suggested themselves. The more she considered, the more did she feel convinced that their common persecutor, even Julius Pennington, was at the bottom of the whole business, and as little did she doubt that all would yet be well, if the favour of that bad man could be conciliated. Yet how? Arrived at this point in her meditations, she sighed audibly and deeply. Lord Norland, who had observed that something was passing in her mind, now

enquired, and agreeing with her in the only means, hopeless almost as they were, which seemed to promise even a shadow of success, he ordered out his carriage, and determined to proceed immediately, and brave the still increasing storm.

All the energies of Rachel's mind were now in full employ, and as they occasionally forced their way with much difficulty through opposing drifts of snow, to which the rising blast was now continually adding, she was heedless of the danger, and the only anxiety which possessed her mind, was that of reaching their destination in sufficient time for the accomplishment of their purpose.

On descending the steep hill which blocks up one side of the romantic vale in which the town of M—— is situated, Rachel under other circumstances would have viewed with admiration the snow-covered eminences, first rising like gentle knolls, and then heightening almost into

the altitude of mountains, which enclosed and sheltered this beautiful and highly-favoured district. Before her lay the town with its curling smoke and towering steeple; on her right, bending woods of oak and fir; while far away to the left, a broad and transparent river, after many a graceful curve, lost itself amid the gloomy recesses of a rocky defile. "O that the beauty of this opening scene," thought she, "may be the type of happier prospects to me and mine. Unfortunate De Ruse!—unhappy Hurstwood! Mine indeed he is, if the affectionate yearnings of an ever-attached heart can make him so. Alas! how strange it is, that he should be the victim of such horrible, such unmerited, such unexampled persecution. O could I but be the means of restoring him to his parent—of saving him for a world he would ornament by his virtues—there would be no sacrifice too great to accomplish a purpose so dear to my own heart!"

It was evening ere they reached M——. No sooner had they alighted from the carriage, and secured accommodations in that well accustomed inn, which even now, after the lapse of more than a century, hangs it ancient sign to the passenger, though indeed less noticed than formerly, than Lord Norland set out to consult with the chief magistrate of the town, and to obtain every possible information which might tend in the remotest degree to forward his object.

From this gentleman, who fortunately was at home, his lordship received every attention due to his rank; but when the object of his mission was explained, he shook his head mysteriously, and candidly requested that he might not be urged to meddle in the matter. "These times, my lord," said the worthy and cautious magistrate, "are times of danger, when every prudent man has enough to do to look to himself. There is now made so little distinction between a cri-

minal and his friends, that were I to interfere about the postponement of to-morrow's execution, I should be branded with the names of papist and jacobite to the latest hour of my existence. Moreover, my lord," added he, in an under tone, "this affair that you mention has been made a high party business, and I do verily believe that had the young man been as innocent of rebellion as I am myself, he would nevertheless have been proved guilty, if party influence and false swearing could have done it. But so far from being innocent, he at once pleaded guilty, so that the judge had nothing to do but to condemn him to death, and the sheriff will see the sentence duly executed."

"What do you mean by insinuating this to be a party business?" enquired his lordship.

"I mean simply this, my lord," replied the magistrate; "that the young rebel's principal accuser is his private enemy,

and the sheriff is that accuser's uncle; so that, considering the confusion of the times, I see no possible chance of his escape."

"And pray who is his accuser?" demanded Lord Norland.

"One Mr. Pennington, junior, of St. Marions; but that he is the private enemy of the prisoner, I only judge from circumstances that have come under my own observation; such as the hurry in which the trial was huddled over, and the speed with which the sentence is about to be enforced. In fact, my lord, they seem to me to dread that very interference which is now so likely to take place."

"Then as a personal favour I may not calculate upon your assistance?"

"Certainly not," replied the magistrate politely, yet with firmness. "It is an established rule of mine never to meddle where, though I cannot benefit others, I may yet injure myself."

"Then what plan would you advise me to adopt under circumstances?"

"To conciliate the sheriff if you can; though I much doubt the possibility. He is as ignorant as an ass, and as obstinate, and withall as proud as Lucifer himself."

All this turned out much as Lord Norland had anticipated; and as he left the house of the magistrate, he paused to consider what was next to be done. To apply to the sheriff was useless, except through the medium of Julius Pennington himself; and now that he found from Rachel's story, that jealousy was superadded to pecuniary motives, he dared not to indulge the slightest hopes of success. Most deeply did he commiserate the situation of young Hurstwood, to be thus sacrificed in the very face of his mistress and his father's nearest friend, without their being able by any means to avert the blow.

Determined, however, that nothing

should remain undone, he proceeded to the sheriff's lodgings, and on enquiry found that Julius was there, and engaged in close conference with his uncle. Without giving his name, Lord Norland desired to be shown into the room in which they were sitting, saying to the servant that he had business of peculiar urgency.

His entrance at so unseasonable a time was not, as we may well imagine, greeted with any particular marks of satisfaction on the part of the astonished gentlemen. Julius rose from his seat in evident alarm, while the sheriff retaining his, stared unmeaningly at the intruder, but without the common civility of offering him a seat.

Lord Norland, however, took the matter into his own hands, and begging Julius to resume his seat, and taking one himself at a short distance, opened his business in terms the most warm and energetic, yet so far conciliating as was consistent with his principles of rectitude.

Once assured that his lordship was not the bearer of any reprieve for his victim, Julius with a triumphant smile, and in an attitude of haughty defiance, listened to the proposals urged upon him. Every fresh appeal which was made to his feelings as a man, and to his principles as a Christian, he received with an insufferable smile of contempt; and it was only when pecuniary temptations were hinted at, that he seemed in the least degree moved. This, however, was but for a moment; for when Lord Norland began to press the matter, and urge upon him the necessities of his situation, his brow contracted, his eyes flashed with indignant fire, and he thus put an end to the interview:

"I thank you, my lord, for reminding me of what I ought never to forgive nor forget. My situation is indeed necessitous; from unbounded prosperity, I am indeed hurled to a state of beggary and dependence; and let me ask who was was the cause? The father of this very

miscreant, whose hated existence you are bold and presuming enough to require at my hands! No, my lord. I have toiled and laboured to effect this desirable end, and though the rebel's death will not now be productive to me of all the advantages which I once fondly anticipated, it will at least gratify my revenge; for I have been doubly injured. You offer me wealth, the restitution of my paternal estate, the cancelling of all further claims upon my family, and a total oblivion of all that has past. It is a noble offer, my lord, and as such I should run to accept; but to see Harry Hurstwood alive, in the enjoyment of those prospects which were so lately all but my own — to see him spending my wealth, married to the object of my affections, wearing my honours — I had rather live in nakedness and in want—be the common object of derision and insult — be the outcast of God, and the abomination of men, than suffer such a scene to conclude my blighted

prospects. I told you—I told all, on that cruel day, when even the common necessaries of life were wrested from me and my family, and exposed to public sale—when my foolish father was dragged to the prison he so well merited—I told you all that the day of vengeance was approaching, and that one bell alone would be needed to welcome him to his last home. To-morrow's sun rises upon that day; a day which has been the source of unnumbered toils and difficulties and dangers to accomplish; and I tell you, my lord, I would not barter that triumphant moment of sweet revenge, when the grave opens upon the last of the Hurstwoods, and one blow severs him from existence, for all that you could offer, or even monarchs themselves could bestow. I have yet one subject to touch upon, and if you please, you may communicate my sentiments to the person concerned. I am no way, my lord, so indebted to your family, that

there is the least necessity of conferring favours. From your name I date the deepest of my injuries, and Rachel Kemyss shall know that her desertion, her unmerited desertion of one lover, is the real foundation of the untimely end of another. I am not a man to stand calmly by, and see my affections outraged, my hopes blasted, my person rejected and despised, and my plans forestalled, without one effort to vindicate myself, and accomplish a glorious revenge. She has made me wretched — she drove me to desperation — and I am justified in my own mind in effecting a severe retaliation, and only do I hope that the events of to-morrow may plant a dagger of remorse in her breast which may canker there for ever!"

Julius ceased. He rose from his seat, and left the room abruptly, followed by his relative, as quickly as his infirmities would allow him to move.

Lord Norland sat still for a few mo-

ments, astonished at what he had heard, and almost doubting his own senses. There seemed to him a something so like deliberate and cold-blooded murder in the conduct and motives of Julius Pennington, that it was some time ere he could perfectly bring home to his mind the reality of what appeared so enormous and shocking. Yet when he coolly reflected upon the great stake which was at issue between Julius and his rival, when he considered the immensity of the former's disappointment in losing such a prize as Rachel, whether her attractions, personal or mental, or her brilliant prospects as to fortune were considered; and what was worst of all, losing this to the very man who had come to turn him out of his possessions, he was more inclined to make allowances for the wild extravagance of his revenge, and to impute it to the workings of a bad heart in unison with a distempered mind.

Finding that nothing was now to be

done, and that it must be the work of Providence alone to afford any relief in the present emergency, he left the house, intending to return to the inn, and break the issue of the conference to his niece. For her he felt more deeply than he could express, nor could he help owning, that could the past be overlooked, and Harry Hurstwood be restored to his friends, no objection would be felt on his part to the completion of an union in itself so desirable, though the attachment had arisen, and been hitherto carried on, without either his consent or connivance.

CHAP. VI.

As soon as Lord Norland had left her on his unavailing errand, Rachel retired to her sleeping room, in order to give free and undisturbed scope to the indulgence of her sorrows. She had not been there long however, before she was aroused by a rap at the door. It was the chamber-maid who informed her that a person wished to speak a few words with her in the parlour.

Wondering who it could be, and partly conjecturing that some message might have arrived from her uncle, she obeyed the summons, and on entering the room found to her surprize the same person whom she had seen acting as ostler at the petty inn where the cavalcade had stopped with their prisoner.

On enquiring his business, the man prefaced his reply by carefully closing the door, and taking every precaution against being overheard. He then stepped mysteriously up to Rachel, and enquired in a low voice, if she had a more than common acquaintance with the rebel, that was to be executed on the morrow. Rachel blushed, and rather drew back at the oddity of the interrogation, when the man begging pardon, said, that a true answer to his question was necessary before he said any thing further.

Rachel anxious to know the drift of this strange proceeding, said, that the prisoner was indeed a very dear friend, and if he, the ostler, had any thing to communicate concerning him, she should be obliged by the information. "Then, if he is so very near a friend," said the man, "no doubt you would like to get him out of the scrape, if possible?"

"Certainly!" replied Rachel, with em-

phasis, "and I dare engage to say that any one who could procure his enlargement would be amply rewarded for it."

"That's just what I wanted to know," said the ostler; "because I have a plan in my head which, I think, would do the job, if there be only plenty of silver to back it."

"Neither silver nor gold would be wanting to accomplish the object," replied Rachel; "I expect the gentleman with whom I am travelling, to be here in a short time, and if your plan is such as he would like to adopt, you will be amply rewarded for your trouble."

"That may be all very likely, young lady," said the ostler sarcastically; "but I am not going to have any thing to do in this matter either with lords or squires. Neither do I want any great reward for myself — only say that you are willing to carry the thing through by yourself, without mentioning it to any living soul

whatsoever, and I think I can put you in a way of saving the young man's life without a word being known of the matter."

Rachel paused, and looked at the man earnestly, as not knowing what to say to his proposal. "Come, miss," continued he, "make up your mind and promise at once. If his life is not worth a little risk and the keeping of a secret, I had better be moving off. I thought you would have jumped at the thing."

"So I do," replied Rachel, hesitatingly; "but I had much rather you would allow me to mention it to my uncle. He would act so much better than I should, and I am sure you would get double the reward."

The man was still peremptory, and Rachel, willing as she was to grasp at any straw, promised the most inviolable secresy since he was so determined to require it.

"When I have told you my plan," resumed the ostler, "you will see as clearly as I do, that no man in his senses, as things are going now, would dare to undertake it. It would be as much as his life is worth. Now a lady like you may do it all snugly enough; for in the first place nobody would suspect you, and if they did, I think nobody would blame you, or ever think of punishing you; and therefore if you can only pluck up your courage to go through with it, all will be well yet."

Rachel, to whom the scene altogether was matter of unfeigned surprize, listened with more attention, as she noticed the open and honest countenance of the man who thus strangely addressed her. A kind of inspiration seized her in the prospect of saving the life so dear to her, and she felt that all dangers compared with it were of little or no consequence.

The man continued. "Since you have promised to keep the matter to yourself,

and there is money enough in hand to go through with it, I will tell you what I know. Master sent me over here to fetch up some fresh horses as they were likely to be wanted this stormy weather, and so I went to the sign of the Raven to have a pint before I returned home. Who should I meet with there but Michael, my own sister's husband, as rough and clumsy a fellow as there is in the country. Now Michael has been gaoler these five years back, and for any thing I know to the contrary gave satisfaction to their worships the justices, till yesterday 's a week ago, when they told him he should quit when his quarter was out. Michael was vexed at this, but luckily kept a quiet tongue in his head, and never mentioned the thing to any body but his wife and me, and so we sat together this very evening and talked matters over. Among other things we talked about this new prisoner, and the execution and such like,

and I told Michael what a pity it was for such a fine spirited young fellow should be sent out o' the world before his time. So we went on from one thing to another, till I mentioned about your screaming, and knowing the gentleman, and his knowing you, and Michael stared hard when I told him you were a lady of quality, and travelled with your own servants and horses and the like, and all at once he said — "Do you think Jack she'd pay? If she would, I wouldn't mind doing a good turn for her."

"I understood what he meant, for he was always close fisted and greedy of cash, though he can keep his own counsel as well as any body. Well, my lady, we talked it over as we sat, and I agreed to sound your mind about the young man, and if you were willing to strike a bargain. Michael is for being off at all events as soon as his quarter is up, and he would like of all things to spite their worships a

little before he started, if he could only manage it quietly and to his own profit. This is what I have to say. If you would like to hear more of the plan, and think you dare go through with it, you will find Michael in the old porch of the little church that stands by the river side as you enter the town, exactly as the clock chimes one. Have a bold heart, lady, and go with your purse well provided, and I'll lay my life the young man will be twenty miles from here before the towns-folks think of stirring from their beds. If you only say that you are willing to try, I will tell Michael, and he will not fail to give you the meeting. As for me, I must be off by twelve or so, to be ready for the morning."

Rachel was bewildered with the daring novelty of the man's proposition, and stood for some time doubtingly, as if not knowing exactly what to say.

"Well, well," said the ostler, retreat-

ing towards the door, "I see you have a faint heart on the matter, and so I'll say no more about it. But when one thinks, it seems a small thing to do for a friend when his life has only a few hours to run without it. Then I may tell Michael that you had rather not risk it, but that things may take their chance?"

"Are you sure, then," said Rachel, trembling, "are you quite sure that he would not allow me to mention the plan to my uncle?"

"Yes, I am sure he would not. And moreover, I am sure of this, that your uncle, as you call him, had rather you undertook the job; for if he stirred a step in it, I would not give a grain of sand for the head on his shoulders. He *dare* not meddle, young lady, I tell you again, and so there's an end of the argument."

Rachel was silent, but putting her hand into her purse, gave the ostler money. "Then I may tell Michael, my

lady, that you will see him in the church-porch at one?" Still Rachel spoke not, but the man taking it as a kind of assent, darted out of the room, and was gone without any possibility of recall.

Musing upon this strange interview with feelings of perfect astonishment, Rachel sat down and awaited in doubt and darkness the arrival of Lord Norland. Much, however, as she desired to inform him of what had past, her own good sense and judgment convinced her that the arguments of her new friend the ostler were true, and that to have any communication with her uncle on the subject would have the effect of either bringing his person into danger, or of obliging her to relinquish the plan altogether.

She could not, the more she thought upon the part she must act, view it without considerable repugnance, for it warred greatly with the innate delicacy of

her nature to go forth at so untimely an hour, and trust herself into the hands of a stranger. Yet the object of this was noble, she felt her heart and her person equally pledged to her lover, and perhaps thus situated, there would be no great breach of female delicacy in attempting his release, from what she considered most unmerited persecution. And why stand upon common points of every day propriety, when the life, nay the honour of one so dear to her was concerned. Her's was no common situation, and she almost felt herself called upon to use extraordinary measures.

The entrance of Lord Norland interrupted her meditations. He proceeded to give her a full and minute account of every thing that had passed since he had left her, and declared, with a burst of unaffected feeling, that his distress of mind was unequalled by any thing he had ever before experienced.

After leaving the sheriff and Julius Pennington, he had returned to the house of the chief magistrate, and obtained from him an order to be admitted to an interview with the prisoner. Rachel's heart was ready to burst, as she heard the praises lavished upon her lover by one so little given to unmeaning commendation as his lordship. The calm resignation and fortitude of Harry Hurstwood—the unruffled mildness and dignity of his manner—the penitential and affectionate messages he sent to his father, were the warm theme of Lord Norland's approbation; and he declared, that while he had never seen a person more worthy to live, he had never seen one more prepared and ready to die.

Nothing is more delightful than to listen to the commendation of those we love. It has the pleasing effect of heightening our affection by increasing the value of its object, and we cannot help

indulging a self-complacent feeling in the thought, that our judgment is backed by the opinion of others. Rachel felt all this, yes, painfully felt it at the present moment, and as each warm expression fell from her uncle's lips, she found more and more how true and how ardent was the nature of her attachment.

"Oh, why should I waver, if it is possible to save him?" escaped almost audibly in the deep sigh which she involuntarily heaved.

But the crisis of his lordship's story was not yet come. As he returned from the prison, he saw a number of men busily employed in fixing a scaffolding in the market-place, and on enquiry, he found that they were preparing for the execution on the ensuing morning.

"You see, therefore, my dear Rachel," added he, "that hope is now madness. We must prepare ourselves for the worst that can happen. All human aid seems

denied to our unfortunate friend; — we must now give him up into the hands of an all-seeing Providence."

"And may that all-seeing Providence direct and accomplish his liberation!" ejaculated Rachel, with an energy and depth of feeling which almost made his lordship start.

Yes! Rachel's mind was now fully determined. We magnify evils in the distance, but, when urged forward, we frequently brave them with unanticipated resolution. The very idea of the scaffold already preparing, on which her lover was to suffer, was enough to fortify her resolutions, and so great a horror did she feel at such cold-blooded persecution and cruelty, that almost could she have braved similar dangers to have relieved any other fellow-creature.

Every moment seemed now long till the time of retiring to rest, and she spent the intervening hours, wondering how

she could ever have hesitated in undertaking the task. She endeavoured too to acquire such a degree of composure, as might give to her attempt every probability of success, so that when her uncle advised her to retire, he could not refrain from complimenting her upon the uncommon resignation she displayed.

"I hope, my dear sir, I shall be still more resigned to-morrow," said she, as she closed the door after her.

Once in her own room, Rachel knelt down and poured forth an eloquent and fervent strain of devotion to the Great Arbiter of all events, committing herself to his gracious guidance and protection, and imploring his merciful forgiveness, if the act in which she was about to engage was in any way contrary to those sound principles of religion and prudence by which she constantly, in all the ordinary and extraordinary events of her life, endeavoured to direct her course. She well

knew, that, on the present occasion, all the prejudices and all the affections of her nature were engaged and in full action, and she was candid enough to believe that thus situated, even the best of men might be betrayed into actions which their cooler reason would condemn.

Perhaps this suspicion of our own motives, even on occasions of less importance than the present, would be our greatest safeguard against the commission of errors; and when we consider the shortsightedness of our human nature, there is no blessing we are found more fervently to pray for, than that illumination of spirit and freedom from the film of prejudice, which might enable us to see things as they are, and to direct our actions with becoming consistency and rectitude of principle.

The clock had struck twelve, and Rachel, wrapped in her travelling cloak,

awaited the time of commencing her attempt in trembling anxiety. The mind that can undertake a bold thing, at the moment that some external stimulus urges it on, is not unfrequently found to flag, if even a trifling portion of time is suffered to intervene. Then are all the probabilities, nay, the very possibilities of failure, together with the long train of doleful consequences that might ensue, brought home to the terrified imagination; and to undertake with decision, frequently requires both a bold and determined spirit, and a good cause.

To Rachel the consequences of any failure of her attempt were truly appalling. She knew not what Lord Norland might think, if the ill success of her undertaking proved its folly, and exposed the ardour of her affections to a scurrilous and misjudging world. Yet in the present case, she considered her lover, not so much the victim of the law, as of

self-interested and revengeful persecution, and she reflected how bitter might be her future repentance, if, from the want of a little present firmness and resolution, she withheld the friendly interference which was so wonderfully put in her choice, and suffered the man, to whom she had solemnly pledged her affections, to be cruelly butchered by his enemies.

Again she called to mind the conduct of Julius Pennington, and the declaration of the chief magistrate to her uncle, and this confirmed her in the conviction, that successful or unsuccessful, still she was right. And why should she despair of accomplishing her object? And if accomplished, why should the world know by whom? There was no necessity of her delicacy being offended by the publicity of the action. And, besides,

> "How poor an instrument
> "May do a noble deed!"

Rachel rose from her reflections, open-

ed her casement, and looked out. All was now silent. The street was cleared of the bustle of population. No midnight reveller was seen staggering to his wretched home—no drowsy carrier preparing his pack-horses for their midnight toil; but all was still as death itself, and the broad masses of moon-light, which fell on the opposite side of the street, still further increased the resemblance.

As she paused in awful observance of the scene, rendered still more peculiar by the snowy covering of every surrounding object, the clock of a distant church chimed the half hour. Every sound went to her heart, for she knew that the time was come—that in all probability another hour would decide the fate of a fellow-creature, and her own future destiny. She shuddered. She felt that she was a woman—and again fell on her knees, and implored the Divine forgiveness and protection!

No time was now to be lost. The

place of meeting was at some distance. The ostler had informed her how to find it. She gently opened her door and listened. All was still, and she proceeded without interruption to the side entrance, from which she had been instructed to make her egress. The bolts yielded easily to her touch, and closing the door gently after her, she found herself at length pacing the silent street, the only visible inhabitant of the wide and spacious city!

The unbounded liberality of Lord Norland had rendered it an easy matter to subtract sufficient from her private purse, to serve and more than serve her present purposes, and Rachel felt easy in the thought, that, however exorbitant the gaoler's demands might be, still she had sufficient to satisfy them.

As she hurried along the street, every thing became an object of scrutiny and alarm, and she even started at her own shadow, as turning an abrupt and obscure

corner it darkened the snowy path before her. Sometimes she stopped and listened, and endeavoured to recollect the directions given her, and once pausing for a moment near the low and wretched casement of a dilapidated cottage, the incoherent mutterings of some uneasy dreamer caused her to start away and fly along as if some one was in pursuit.

At length she reached the suburbs, and welcomed the sight of the distant inclosures, as if they gave her the privilege of breathing freely. She heard the noise of a river as it hurried over its pebbly bed, and from this she felt secure that the place of appointment was not far distant. A little further and she gained the bridge, the passage to which was guarded by a strong and ancient tower, through which was an archway, formerly defended by a massive portcullis.

With faultering step she passed through its gloomy recess, though once the clanking of chains seemed to strike on her

startled fancy. About a stone's cast, and the low but very ancient tower of the church was seen to top a neighbouring cottage, while the chancel occupied a kind of promontory, around which flowed the river.

Arrived at the little gate which admitted her into the small and grassy cemetry, she again paused, and looked with anxious eyes towards the round Saxon porch, from which she almost expected to see some dreadful figure emerge. Nothing, however, was visible, and making an effort for the recovery of her resolution, and half ashamed of the many fears to which she had given way, she glided softly towards it, and was about to screen herself from observation within its solemn obscurity, when the deep and under tones of a human voice arrested her progress, and almost caused her to fly with apprehension.

"You're a brave bird, however, that you are," said the voice, "and so don't

be frightened now at the sight of a friend. I never thought, if the truth must be told, that you would come out at this time o'night. But there's no telling what lasses will do for their jo's till they're tried, and so I came here on the risk on't. Come, miss, don't be frightened. If I was never honest before, hang me if I could help it now, so pluck up and be hearty."

Poor Rachel had, indeed, no little cause for apprehension, when, as emerging from the porch, the moon-beams fell broadly upon the person and countenance of her companion. He was unusually tall, broad, and bony, and his countenance exhibited an expression of impudence and ferocity, which made her shudder. Over his dress was a large rough wrapper or cloak, and on his head was a scull cap with narrow brims, such as were worn a century before. He was, moreover, booted and spurred, and Rachel observed a long pistol stuck in his

belt, as the air accidentally blew his cloak aside. In the company of such a personage, no wonder that she felt quite powerless, and as he stood near her, displaying the full proportions of his gigantic frame, she found herself for some time unable to utter a word.

"Come, my pidgeon," said he, at length, with a shocking familiarity, "we are well enough to our time, but we must not be after standing here, staring at one another, while there is business to be done. I suppose the fellow told you my terms. Have you brought the money? The wheel will never work without oil, and plenty too, for it's an awkward business, and may bring me into trouble, if I don't put my best leg foremost."

Rachel produced her purse with a trembling hand. The gaoler stretched forward, and took it with an eager grasp. After feeling the weight, and examining the contents, he returned it with a grin of satisfaction.

"It will do very well. But mind you, lady, I mean to act honestly and fairly by you, and so here's the money till the job's done and it is fairly earned. The gentleman in the tower, yonder, shall be the witness. Come, we must be budging. They are sharp folks in our town, and there may be some mischance if we dally about here, and the clock finger is just upon one too. Come along."

Rachel followed, somewhat reassured by the fellow's apparent honesty of intention. They soon arrived, but without any interchange of conversation, at the old tower near the bridge, through which she had previously passed. Here the gaoler stopped, and as he was disengaging a bunch of keys which were beneath his cloak, Rachel ventured to speak and suggest, that if the prisoner was confined there, there would be no necessity for her presence, but she could stay below, and merely be an unknown witness of his liberation.

"No — no —" said the man, resolutely, "that will never do. If I should happen to be brought up for this, it will never do for them to say that I unlocked the door and struck off the fetters. I must swear that my wife took the keys, and that I knew nothing of the matter. No — no, miss. You must do it all yourself, and depend upon it, it will be best done. Wrap yourself up in your cloak, and keep your face close under your bonnet, and I'll warrant he'll never stop to enquire who you are, when he once finds himself loose. The man's not such a fool as to stay squinting under a woman's bonnet, when he has to run for his life. See — this is the key of the outer door, the inner is fastened with a padlock, so you'll have no trouble there."

Feeling that she was now too far advanced to retreat from her purpose, Rachel tacitly obeyed, and after receiving the necessary instructions about the fetters, with a trembling hand and beating

heart proceeded to unlock the massive outer door. After several ineffectual attempts, however, she was obliged to give it up, and the gaoler fearing any further delay, at length came forward with a growl of impatience, and with one rapid twist of his hand, shot the bolt and sent the door reeling back upon its hinges.

With a kind of desperate courage, Rachel ventured into the gloomy vacuum which now presented itself, and was not sorry to perceive above her the feeble rays of a small lamp, when she had ascended about a dozen steps of the worn and circular staircase. Meanwhile the gaoler remained below, to guard against any surprize, and cautioned Rachel, as she begun the ascent, not to lose one moment, by yielding either to her fears, or suffering any foolish palaver with the prisoner.

She obeyed his injunction in the first instance by seizing the lamp which was

rudely fastened to the wall, and proceeding without delay to apply the key to the padlock, and thus disengaging the door from the strong and rusty staple. This was easily accomplished, when, fearful of indulging even one moment of thought, she took the lamp from the floor on which she had placed it, and with an unsteady step entered the apartment.

It was not large — but on her first entrance she saw nothing through the gloom. Indeed she could scarcely bear to cast her eyes forward. The noise of the fetters, however, as the prisoner started upon his feet from the miserable couch on which he had been laid, convinced her that he was indeed there, and with a desperate effort she advanced close to the place where he stood, and suffered the feeble light of the lamp to glare in his face.

It was indeed her lover! There he stood with a countenance full of surprize,

curiosity, and doubt, darting from his eloquent eyes a keen gaze upon the being who thus strangely disturbed the solitude of his prison.

For a few moments Rachel could attempt no more. She stood silent, keeping the light averted from her face. When at length, with the quick voice of astonishment, the prisoner demanded her name and business, she rallied sufficiently to say in a low voice, that she came to free him from his bonds, and that he must fly immediately.

"But I demand, and I will know to whom I am indebted for this unexpected interference?" said he, suddenly placing himself between her and the door.

Rachel saw that there was now but one plan to adopt. She threw back her bonnet, and allowed him a full view of her pale and disordered features. But she could not speak. Sobs choaked her utterance—the tears ran unbidden down her cheeks—and almost fainting, she leaned

against the damp walls of the prison for support.

The astonishment of Hurstwood at a sight so extraordinary burst forth in repeated exclamations. Scarcely could he believe his senses. He stamped, he rubbed his eyes to convince himself that he was awake; and at length, finding that indeed it was no dream of the night—no phantasma of the imagination, he addressed Rachel in a tone of the most anxious enquiry.

At first she was too much overcome to answer any thing; but the hoarse voice of the gaoler from below urging her to make haste, at length roused her into action.

"You must indeed ask no questions," said she, addressing Hurstwood, "for I have no time to answer them. Let me free you from your fetters while I am able. I feel as if my strength was going, and I am anxious to finish that for which I have dared so much. Promise me, when

you are gone, that you will forget as long as you live the dreadful events of this night, and I shall be more happy in the reflection of what I have done."

"As long as I live, I shall live for you, my dearest Rachel, and to execute all your commands," said the enamoured Hurstwood, while, forgetful of the yet critical nature of his situation, his bosom was throbbing with a thousand delightful and hitherto unknown sensations.

"Come, come, make haste — I hear footsteps coming this way!" shouted the gaoler from the bottom of the stairs, in a voice of thunder.

"Oh how shall I release you!" cried Rachel, in bitter agony, as with no apparent success she attempted to unloose the fetters.

"Only be cool, my Rachel," said Hurstwood, in a calm and soothing voice. "Here — first disengage this hand, and I can manage the rest myself."

At length, but not without much diffi-

culty, the task was accomplished, and Hurstwood was beginning to pour forth a torrent of acknowledgments, and make an unlimited string of enquiries, when Rachel stopped him, and still trembling with apprehension, entreated him to lead the way out of so disagreeable and ominous a place. "You said you would obey me," uttered she, in a voice of earnest petition, and oh do not let us risk our present good prospects by any unavailing and foolish delay. Did not the gaoler say that some one was approaching?"

"I am gone," replied he emphatically. "In obeying your wishes I execute my own, for now life is doubly, doubly dear to me."

In a few moments they had descended the steps, and stood in the gloom of the archway. The gaoler was still there, waiting impatiently for their appearance. Rachel gave him the purse, and returned her acknowledgments for his kindly offices. "Hush!" said he in a low voice

and drawing them both to the darkest recess of the archway—"I fear we are discovered. That young man, a relation of the sheriff's—Mr. Pennington, I believe—passed by just now; and see there he is at this moment waiting on the other side of the bridge."

"Oh what shall I do—is there then no way to escape?" said Rachel, in a tone of the utmost distress. "How foolish I was to imagine it could be accomplished! Fly!" continued she, addressing Hurstwood, "and I will remain here, and endeavour to detain him."

"Is Mr. Pennington alone?" enquired Hurstwood.

"He is," replied the gaoler; "and I think if this young lady will walk along the wall there where the shadow falls, she may get quietly back to her lodgings without any body knowing that she has been here at all."

"But how will you get away yourselves?" enquired Rachel, anxiously.

"Leave that to us, my dear Rachel," whispered Hurstwood. "We two are not likely to be daunted by even Mr. Julius Pennington. If I escape I shall make for Byewood, and this day month, at this very hour, I will be at the bridge of Barle, if you or my friends have any plan to communciate for my future safety. I say *you*, because I consider you as pledged to be mine. Go, dearest Rachel, and may heaven reward you for your goodness!"

"Are you willing still further to assist this gentleman?" said Rachel to the gaoler. "See him safe from this place, and the reward shall be doubled. I cannot go without this assurance."

"Why, lady," replied the man, "as I am discovered, it matters little now what I do. We had better complete the job, and stop yon gentleman's mouth by throwing him into the river below here, before we part. But he moves this way. Off—off this instant, or you will repent it."

"Yes, go, my Rachel — go for my sake as well as your own," said Hurstwood, conducting her safely along a dark wall, and pointing to the open street, which now lay before her as silent as it was when she first ventured out. "Your staying longer here would be equally dangerous to yourself and us. If there should be any disturbance, the fewer we are in number the better."

Scarcely had they parted, ere the voice of Julius Pennington reached her ear. She did not pause even for an instant, but gathering strength from her fears, ran towards the inn as quickly as terror could wing her steps; and at length, breathless with haste, and faint from anxiety and emotion, she reached her room and threw herself upon her bed, half dead with terror and fatigue.

CHAP. VII.

THE sun was up, and glancing his rays upon the snowy summits of the surrounding hills, ere Rachel started from the deep yet feverish slumber, by which, almost in spite of herself, nature had endeavoured to recruit the late exhaustion of body and of mind which she had sustained.

As she rose and began to prepare herself for meeting her uncle, the deep and solemn tone of the great bell, muffled to render it still more impressive, struck upon her ear. She started. The events of the preceding night seemed to her now as a kind of dream, — an indistinct vision, of which at each returning vibration of the knell of death, she was almost inclined to doubt the reality.

Yet when she collected her thoughts,

all the recent occurrences returned so vividly to her remembrance—all her preceding emotions were so fresh upon her mind—the very form and substance of what she had witnessed was so indelibly impressed upon her imagination, that she had no doubt remaining, but of the result of her bold and almost inconceivable effort for Hurstwood's liberation.

Why should the muffled bell carry terror to the hills and consternation to the vallies? Why, as she looked forth from her casement, should the crowds be hurrying in all the silence of a dismal curiosity towards the spot where the fatal scaffold awaited its victim? Why should these things be so, if Hurstwood had escaped? Surely ere this the watchful vengeance of his enemies had explored his narrow prison—surely they must be certain of their victim, or why commence the awful and melancholy accompaniments of his doom?

Again Rachel started—again her heart

sunk within her. The reflection that she had left Hurstwood in a doubtful situation — discovered in his attempt by his bitterest enemy, and in company too with a wretch, who without feeling or principle, would act any way to serve his own interest — these contingencies forced themselves dreadfully upon her reason, and joined with the proceedings without, almost convinced her that the rencounter with Julius Pennington had turned out as unfortunately as her fears could anticipate. Oh! why did he not escape with her instead of loitering on the spot for the mere purpose of braving his enemy!

Observing that a circle were gathered together beneath her window in earnest conversation, she gently opened the casement, in order to draw from their accounts, if possible, some elucidation of her own fears. She found, that full of wonder and curiosity, and with many

exclamations of pity, without much in their hearts, they were about to move on to the place of execution, only stopping to hear, from one of the sheriff's attendants, the wonderful story of a great lord being at the inn with his daughter,—and how he had interfered with Mr. Sheriff and their worships the justices to get the day put off;—how that the sheriff cared no more about a lord than about a commoner, and would not listen to what his lordship said at any rate. They all declared this to be very odd; and an old man was heard to say, that he had known the time that this same sheriff would have gone barefoot across the county to have spoken to a lord, and he was much mista'en if there wasn't something more at bottom of it. This produced a rejoinder from the sheriff's man; and a number of coarse expressions beginning to be bandied about, and meeting with a due portion of applause from the by-

standers, Rachel closed her casement, disappointed, and almost fainting with suspense and alarm.

At this moment her maid entered the room, and after presenting a note from Lord Norland, was ordered to retire. The note was to inform Rachel that, without waiting for her to breakfast, he had gone out with the intention of again interfering with the authorities, and if possible, of procuring a few days delay of the sentence against young Hurstwood. That in case his application was again unsuccessful, he should visit his unfortunate friend in prison, and devote those few moments which might remain, to the exertion of every friendly and consolatory office. He would return as quickly as he was able, and hurry her from a place and scene, which he was well aware must be appalling to her in the highest degree.

This note was dated six o'clock, and, therefore, Rachel concluded that his

lordship had been already gone some hours. It appeared strange — alarmingly strange, that nothing had as yet transpired, concerning the prisoner's escape, and therefore her anxiety and her fears were only increased, by the information the note conveyed of her uncle's movements.

Scarcely had she finished reading, ere the distant rolling of muffled drums, and the shrill accompaniment of the fifes were heard approaching, and looking out, she perceived, with dismay, a company of soldiers marching to the place of execution, followed by a vast crowd of interested spectators of all ranks, ages, and descriptions.

Now almost hopeless, Rachel drew the curtains before the windows, and in the momentary expectation of Lord Norland's arrival, with some dreadful story which would prove all her exertions, all her hopes abortive, she threw herself upon her bed, and sick, nay almost lifeless with

anxiety and despair, awaited the stroke which was now alone necessary to make her perfectly miserable.

Half an hour of dreadful suspense wore away. No noise now invaded the solitude of the street without. So still it was, that all the inhabitants seemed either to have deserted their homes, to be witnesses of the melancholy spectacle, or to have sought the most retired recesses of their dwellings to avoid the horrors of it.

At length, a few hurried steps were heard along the pavement. A few moments more, and a mixed and confused murmur, as of a rushing multitude, arose and approached nearer and louder.

"All then is over!" ejaculated Rachel, and overcome—quite overcome with the dreadful nature of her emotions, she sunk back lifeless upon the couch from whence she had partially risen.

As by her own orders no one was to approach her room, Rachel was slow in

recovering. As she placed her hand to her now cold and aching forehead, and endeavoured to recall her scattered recollection, almost was she tempted to wish that life had fled altogether, and that her soul had winged its flight from this world of woes and sorrows, together with his, who had so cruelly—cruelly suffered.

As she rose from the couch, and with a wild and disordered look threw her eyes around, the contrast of the gloom of her apartment with the tumult and bustle without most forcibly struck her. Yet it might be, that the assembled crowds were returning from the dreadful spectacle, and perhaps they were coolly engaged in canvassing that very transaction, the mere thought of which curdled her own blood with inexpressible horror.

At length, a rap at her door promised to bring certainty to her fears. Lord Norland entered! He saw at a glance

the situation of his niece, and prudently forbore entering at all upon a subject, which at that moment agitated his own bosom almost beyond sufference.

"My dear Rachel," said he, in a voice of unusual tenderness, "prepare yourself to depart from this place instantly. I have, from private considerations, ordered the carriage to the back of the street. A few steps, and you will be within it, and another hour, I hope, will see us far from hence, and more able to converse upon the extraordinary occurrences of this dreadful morning."

Rachel obeyed in silence. She took her uncle's arm, but he gently encircled her waist, and leading or rather supporting her through a private passage, they entered the carriage, and drove off at a furious rate, leaving the servants to follow.

The first stage they travelled on in perfect silence. Lord Norland reclined in the corner of the carriage in deep and

abstracted thought, and Rachel was too much stupified and weakened by what she had undergone, to have strength sufficient to rouse either herself or him. She felt in a kind of torpor. All the desperate resignation of certainty took possession of her soul, and she now ceased to be agitated by the feverish paroxysms of hope and fear.

The second stage, Lord Norland became somewhat more conversable. He informed his niece that they were retracing their steps to town — that he had business of the utmost importance to communicate to the Count de Ruse. Rachel wondered at the unnecessary ambiguity of the expression. Did not she know the business as well as his lordship? It was the death of his son he had to break to the Count. After an interval of some duration, Lord Norland, as if awaking from a deep reverie, observed, "How inscrutable were the ways of Providence! He alone it is who can

lift us from the gloomy depths of despair, and restore us to the light and consolations of hope. His ways are indeed past finding out!"

Rachel was not so dull as not to perceive that her uncle was alluding to some extraordinary recent event; and when she considered the nature of his late expressions, she could not apply them so as to justify the extent of her fears with regard to Harry Hurstwood.

Hope is more rapid in its progress than despair. Hope catches at shadows and quickly embodies them for its purpose, while despair only comes when the shadows are gone, and hope lies prostrate in the dust. A gleam of confidence, of satisfaction inexpressible, stole into the heart of Rachel, and with indescribable eagerness, she awaited the next preparatory speech of her companion, for that they were preparatory to some wonderful and pleasing narration, she felt now but little doubt.

During the rest of the day, however, Lord Norland preserved a strict silence on the subject which was nearest to her heart, and it was not till the noon of the following day, that a circumstance occurred which speedily opened her eyes to all that had past, and displayed the prudent forbearance of her uncle in so gradually preparing her mind for the reception of a story, with which he fancied she was altogether unconnected.

As they were slowly ascending a hill near the end of their second stage, Rachel pointed out a carriage driving towards them, at a furious and alarming rate, and as it approached nearer she perceived the horses foaming, the postillions flogging, and a gentleman inside, urging them on with considerable vehemence of voice and action.

" It is my friend, the Count de Ruse!" said his lordship, in a tone of surprize. " I know him by the peculiarity of his dress, and the colour of his equipage."

As they came near, Lord Norland made motions for them to stop, and in order effectually to impede their progress, he ordered the postillions to dispose his own carriage so as to hinder their passing.

In a few moments the two gentlemen had sprung from their carriages, and the recognition that ensued was accompanied by many tokens of surprize at an event so unexpected.

"I am glad to see your lordship well," said the count, in a hurried tone, "and for no other person in the world would I have delayed my errand one moment. But one moment must suffice. I must not stop. I will see you in town. I am going to liberate my son—the king has at length been pleased graciously to hand me his pardon."

"You are too late——" said Lord Norland.

"Too late!" interrupted the count, staggering back. "Too late for what?

He has not suffered! The king himself told me that he had always intended his pardon to follow his condemnation. They dare not, my lord — they dare not —"

"You misunderstand me, count;" replied Lord Norland. "Your son has not suffered; — he has escaped! — You are not too late to stop further proceedings — but you are very fortunately too late to liberate him. Yesterday was fixed for the execution of his sentence, and it would most certainly have been carried into effect, had he not found means to escape!"

"Gracious heaven!" solemnly ejaculated the Count de Ruse, sinking on one knee and raising his eyes in fervent thanksgiving and adoration — "how do I adore the merciful and astonishing dispensations of an all-wise and protecting Providence!"

During this scene, and till the parties had some little recovered their composure, we will leave our readers to judge of

the emotions of Rachel as she sat, luckily perhaps, unnoticed in the carriage. An excess of joy and exultation is perhaps more difficult to bear than the opposite extreme; but fortunately for Rachel, she had been somewhat prepared beforehand to hear what she now heard, and the length of conference that took place after the first burst of surprize, enabled her to attain a tolerable degree of composure, when the gentlemen came to the carriage door to receive her congratulations.

The plan to be pursued next came to be canvassed, and while the count declared it to be his intention to pursue his route, and stop any further proceedings against his son, Lord Norland turned to Rachel, and enquired what direction she would now wish to take.

"I know," said he, "that you are not at present quite in love with the dissipations of the town, and, therefore, as I have no longer any business there, I will give you the privilege of choice."

Rachel's eyes glistened and her heart beat. She was most anxious to see her dear friend Mrs. Kirkbye, and ventured to mention it. " By all means," replied his lordship. " We will turn our horses heads towards Kilbank; for by-the-bye I remember some promise I made to that effect when our good friend left us. She has indeed been a mother to you, Rachel, and I am sure you are right in appreciating her kindness. And while we are on the subject, count, allow me to say, that our friend Robert will quarrel with us, if we do not all, as soon as your son's retreat is discovered, form a party under his hospitable roof, and enjoy there the first burst of our good fortune."

The count smiled faintly, for numberless recollections came over him. He bid a hurried farewell, and drove off with rapidity.

It is strange," said Lord Norland, as he seated himself in the carriage, " that after an interval of so many years of ac-

tive life, the Count de Ruse should still retain so lively a remembrance of the follies of his youth. He may come to Kilbank, and even be persuaded to revisit Hurstwood, but I do not think he ever intends to reside in the mansion of his forefathers. He seems to consider himself in the light of a criminal as far as they are concerned, though, I think, could they rise from the grave and pass judgment upon him, it would be far more favourable and honourable to himself than he seems disposed to allow. He is in my estimation a character of extraordinary worth and merit."

CHAP. VIII.

A SHORT time brought Lord Norland and his niece to Kilbank, where they were welcomed by Mrs. Kirkbye and her son, with all that generous and open-hearted enthusiasm which was consistent with the natural warmth of their feelings and their great regard for their visitors.

During their journey, Rachel, with a great effort, disclosed to her uncle all that had passed at M——, and awaited with trembling anxiety, the result of that cool deliberation which marked his manner at the conclusion of her story.

"You must of course think yourself engaged to this young man?" at length observed his lordship gravely. Rachel blushed deeply, and the tears began to flow in spite of all her efforts to detain them. The few doubts she had previously

entertained relative to the propriety of the measures she had pursued, now rose forcibly in judgment against her, and she began to fear that her interference would be condemned and the purity of her motives called in question.

Lord Norland observed her confusion and hastened to reassure her. "You mistake me, my dear Rachel, in thinking that I am finding fault with you. Under all the circumstances of the case, you had been worse than weak and cowardly to have acted differently. I only feel sorry that you were compelled to be the instrument. If your attachment should ripen into a closer union with each other, your devotion to the man of your heart will only be a fresh claim upon his eternal gratitude; but if any thing should occur, and I know more of mankind than you do, to interfere with an affection formed suddenly and under peculiar circumstances; if the flattery of a vain and giddy world should have its

usual effect upon the young man's head and heart, it would be a mortifying reflection to us, that we have taken so prominent a part, and so deeply implicated ourselves in his fortunes. This is all that I meant by my former remark."

"You do not know Mr. Hurstwood as I do, my dear uncle," replied Rachel, "or you would not doubt his honour. But, in what I undertook for him, did I attempt more than I ought under similar circumstances of revengeful persecution to have undertaken for any other fellow-creature? The conquest of villany over unprotected innocence would have been the consequence of my indulging all those delicate scruples which, I confess, I most keenly felt. I looked upon myself as an humble instrument in the hands of Providence. I profess to be no heroine, no Joan of Arc; but when upon my interference depended the life of a fellow-creature, I felt it my duty to come forward."

"I need neither the eloquence of tears, nor the energy of virtuous exculpation to convince me, not merely of the rectitude of your motives, but of the nobleness of the action," replied his lordship smiling. "I am proud of what you have done; and when I consider the villanous haste with which the execution of a sentence, perhaps lawful in itself, was urged forward, in order to impede the interference of mercy, I am convinced that the deed had its source in supreme wisdom; and in making you the instrument of its decrees, I feel as perfectly assured, that there is some sufficient cause which will be displayed by its ultimate effects."

Rachel was much comforted by the consoling nature of these expressions, and begged her uncle to give the sequel to her story, with which she was yet unacquainted. It was as follows:

After leaving the inn, Lord Norland had another interview with the sheriff

and the magistrates, but without success. He next endeavoured to seek out Julius Pennington, but in vain. He had not been seen since the preceding evening. This he thought strange, and at length he accompanied the chief magistrate to the prison. All the populace, with the executioner, the soldiers, and the proper officers, had been for some time assembled in the market-place, in anxious expectation of the prisoner's appearance.

On reaching the tower, to the great surprize of his lordship and the bystanders, the gaoler was not in attendance, and could no where be found. The keys, too, were missing, and in vain was his now deserted residence ransacked for them. The crowd, impatient at the delay, and getting wind of the fact, now rushed towards the tower, and every corner and avenue were in a moment choked up. At length, after immense exertions, the doors were forced. The soldiers rushed in, and a shout of surprize declared to those

without, the existence of something extraordinary.

Soon was all brought to light. A body was found upon the prisoner's couch, exhibiting but feeble remains of life. A short groan on being removed was the only proof of animation. On the body being brought from the dark recesses of the tower to the light of day, the astounded sheriff had no difficulty in recognizing, in the drenched and ghastly figure before him, his own relation and the abettor of his injustice—Julius Pennington!

"How he came to be there, and the precise nature of the misfortune that had befallen him, were of course to all present matter for astonishment and dismay," continued his lordship. "Comparing your story with what I myself witnessed, I have no doubt on my own mind as to the fact. To interfere with desperate men is dangerous; and that the severe treatment he experienced was in conse-

quence of such single-handed interference, you and I can have no doubt. It produced, however, a great uproar in the town. The sheriff was daring enough to tax me with being concerned, and ordered an arrest, but he has repented his mistake as bitterly as I could wish. As to the young man himself, he was not sufficiently recovered when we left to give any account of the transaction; but I am happy to say that the medical men did not totally despair of his recovery. I hope that all he has suffered will have a tendency to humble his presumption, and teach him that humility as to his own pretensions, and a due regard for the rights and feelings of others, are quite necessary in these times to secure him either respectability or permanent success."

In consequence of Rachel's information, Lord Norland frequently struck into the solitudes of Byewood forest, if haply he might meet with Harry Hurst-

wood. Independently of his wish to relieve him from a situation of so little comfort and of so great anxiety, he was desirous to come to an explanation with the young man about Rachel, and to secure his promise of inviolable secresy, as to the part she had taken in his liberation. All search was, however, vain, and as he learnt from a letter received by express from the Count de Ruse, announcing his intention of joining the party at Kilbank, that the gaoler had been traced to the coast where he had embarked with his wife for America, he began to feel less anxiety on that account.

At length the month drew near to its expiration, and the arrival of the count, after a vain search after his son in the neighbourhood of M——, determined his lordship not to delay for one moment beyond the time a private interview with the fugitive. He proposed to Rachel to accompany him, as it might pre-

vent any misunderstanding; but she positively refused, alleging that the persecuted, the unprotected, the unfortunate De Ruse, had far greater claims upon her personal efforts than the rich, the noble, the prosperous Mr. Hurstwood.

Rachel, on the appointed evening, saw his lordship depart, with many and mixed feelings. In a few hours, her lover would appear before her, with perhaps a far different part to act. At least he must be differently considered by her. She was about to witness the meeting and reconcilement of a father and son who had each sustained many vicissitudes, and earned wisdom and experience in the bitter school of adversity. In a few hours, her curiosity was likely to be satisfied, and the dark veil of obscurity withdrawn from many and interesting events.

Into the faithful bosom of her friend, Mrs. Kirkbye did she pour out all her feelings. All that had past since her last

visit at Kilbank, with the exception of the affair at M——, was unreservedly disclosed, and in the perfect approbation which she elicited of all her proceedings since that eventful period, she drew large stores of consolation and confidence.

As to Mrs. Kirkbye herself, she was delighted at the probability of a union which promised so much happiness, and she did all in her power to remove from the mind of her young friend, those feelings of wounded delicacy which partly arose from the injudicious observations of Lord Norland, and which she was afraid would urge Rachel to an extent of reserve and harshness towards Harry Hurstwood which might create uneasiness to both.

"These bachelor uncles," said she to Rachel, "are no judges of the influence of the tender passion. They subject every thing to a severe rule, which even the most virtuous attachment would never allow—a rule which may do well enough

for the regulation of their own every-day, unimpassioned, calculating intercourse, but which is little suited to those unfortunate beings, females in particular, who happen to have a considerable portion of feeling and sentiment mixed up with their common sense."

Lord Norland's motive, however, in wishing to conceal the part his niece had acted in the affair at M—— was purely political. He did not wish any interference with the laws, under the present circumstances of the country, to be laid to his charge, and he well knew that the world in such a case as the present would not be discriminating enough to separate between him and one who was looked upon as his daughter and his heir. This was his sole motive for the concealment of a fact, which he should otherwise have published with exultation to his friends.

It was on the ruined bridge of Barle, a spot so dear to the memory and the affections of Hurstwood, that the inter-

view took place betwixt him and Lord Norland. It was an interview of deep and inconceivable interest. The magnanimity, the rectitude of principle, and the manly candour of the young man was displayed in its full lustre, as they conversed in that wild and solitary spot upon all that was past and all that was to come; and as his lordship stretched forth his hand to the son of his oldest friend, at the conclusion of the conference, he felt that he should never fear trusting into his possession the jewel which he himself so much prized — even Rachel, the daughter of his affections.

It was concluded between them that Hurstwood should not at present visit Kilbank. He longed to embrace his parent; but he wished to have his forgiveness sealed where no interruptions would impede the full display of his filial affection and duty. It was likewise expedient for them immediately to adjourn to town, and settle at once their joint affairs, before

they gave way to the pleasures of recreation; and accordingly Lord Norland promised to prepare the count for a meeting the ensuing day at the next post town on the road to London.

Rachel saw the return of her uncle unaccompanied, with a look of anxiety and dismay which did not escape his notice; and when about an hour afterwards the count, with a hurried step and agitated mien, came to take leave for a few days, she feared something was wrong. After the count's departure, however, the secret was communicated to the party assembled, and nothing could equal the general joy at this favourable news, but the disappointment of Robert Kirkbye in not being the first to congratulate his friend on his good fortune.

In about a fortnight after this event, the party at Kilbank broke up. Sir Ingelram Bell, Robert's uncle, was now daily expected from his seat at Cockayne; and as the young lady who accompanied

him came on a visit to her mother-in-law elect, Mrs. Kirkbye thought it a good opportunity to leave Kilbank to the gentlemen, and retire with her establishment to her house of Netherstead.

After many entreaties, Rachel was allowed by Lord Norland to accompany her, he being obliged to join his friends in town. This was a source of great delight to Rachel, for such was her attachment to the country in which she had experienced such trials and reverses, that she felt no desire to quit it; and from Netherstead too she could look upon the distant woods of Hurstwood, and the chimnies with their square arcades just topping the trees, and the bold and romantic sweep of the river, as it washed the rocky base of the promontory on which the mansion was situated. All these had their charms to the imagination of Rachel.

It is not to be supposed that during all this time Harry Hurstwood had for-

gotten the fair friend of his misfortunes—his deliverer—and, as he considered her, his affianced bride. O no! Much as there was to engage his thoughts and flatter his pride where he was, yet he was ever looking towards the time of his visiting Hurstwood with fond and incessant yearnings.

He had committed to his father the story of his attachment, and nothing could exceed his astonishment and delight. "If there was one thing on earth, my dear Harry," said he, embracing his son, "which was wanting to fill my cup of bliss to the brim, it was your union with the very female you have been so fortunate as to select. Fortunate indeed will you be, if you succeed in making her your's. She is the only woman in the world I should like to see mistress of Hurstwood. Her rank, her beauty, her accomplishments, but above all, her modest and unassuming virtues, render her worthy of a throne. She has every qualification, however, to

adorn a private station, and should I ever be so happy as to call her by the name of daughter, the universe will not contain a prouder man!"

At length business came to an end, and Hurstwood received the signal of his emancipation with a joyful heart. After leaving London, he slept not till he reached Kilbank, and making his friend Robert Kirkbye the confidant of his hopes, they agreed to spend the following day at Netherstead. No sooner, however, had the arrival of the heir of Hurstwood been spread abroad, than all the country, high and low, flocked to Kilbank to offer their congratulations; and so delighted was the hospitable owner with this enthusiastic feeling towards his friend, that he threw open the gates of his mansion, and insisted upon his guests devoting a few days to the proper reception of his friends.

"I have heard my father say, Harry, that Hurstwood kept half the country in

former days; and it would not be creditable for you, as the heir-at-law, to depart altogether from so old a custom, particularly on so joyous an occasion."

Hurstwood acquiesced in the reasoning of his friend, and so well bred,—so courteous to all did he appear—so like the "old folk," as the elders of the neighbourhood expressed it, that each went away full of his praises, and overflowing with blessings and good wishes towards him and his.

At length the morning arrived that he was to pay his respects to the ladies at Netherstead. Our readers, who know the peculiar circumstances under which this visit was made, may sympathize with his feelings as he approached that house which contained Rachel Kemyss! In that beloved name, how much of his history was involved! Scarcely could he conceive the reality of all that had passed, so rapid, so strange did it appear; and yet had it been all delusion,

worlds would not have tempted him to part with it.

Rachel was sitting at an upper window which commanded a view of the opposite banks of the river and the country beyond, when her eyes caught the figures of two horsemen as they emerged from a plantation, and gallopped up the lawn. She knew well who they were, and though she had determined to conduct herself with a becoming dignity of demeanour, yet she found it too severe a task to withdraw her eyes from the elegant figure of Hurstwood, as he reined in his restive steed, and cast many eager glances towards the windows, if haply he might catch a view of what he held dearest upon earth.

The interview which immediately succeeded was embarrassing to both parties; and it was not till the following day that Hurstwood was fortunate enough to monopolize the company of Rachel for a few hours. He marked her when steal-

ing forth: she was about to enjoy a little solitary walk in the grounds, and taking advantage of her surprize at his sudden interruption, he gently drew her arm within his, and entered immediately upon the discussion of subjects too interesting to admit of any denial.

How happy, how very happy did Rachel feel, as she rambled without fear, careless of the eye of observation, free from the reproaches of her own conscience, with the man she loved, and listened to the eloquent and ardent expressions of an attachment only equalled by her own. O yes! in the pleasures of that moment all past dangers and sufferings seemed to be forgotten, and so bright and prosperous a future rose upon their view, that they rather considered the evils they had endured as too cheap a price for the happiness in store.

On a nearer acquaintance with each other, their mutual esteem encreased with their fondness; and as Rachel some-

times listened to the warm and overflowing acknowledgments of her lover for the resolution and firmness she displayed in the preservation of his life, she would wonder within herself at the scruples that had once arisen, and thank Heaven for the impulse which prompted her to undertake so hazardous an attempt.

Sometimes they would mount their horses and explore the many beauties and revisit the well-known scenes of the domain of Hurstwood. Here would they shed tears of joy and thankfulness in those very places which had formerly witnessed their despair; and here would they resolve to avoid those errors which had been so baneful in their effects to others. All their past history was now recounted. Their souls mingled in the close union of sympathy and affection, and they could not but adore the infinite decrees of Providence, who, out of so much evil, had educed so much good.

It was on one of these occasions that

Hurstwood gave the following account of what had befallen him at Covecourt, after his leaving Rachel on the shore. On rapidly turning the point of the promontory, he found himself within a few paces of a party of four men, two of whom were dragging a female forcibly along. At a glance he discovered Julius Pennington and Reuben, and that same Beechley whom he had seen at the hut some time previously. They as quickly perceived him; but taking advantage of their surprize, he rushed forward and made towards a thick coppice, pursued by the three before mentioned.

On gaining the covert, through which was a path leading towards Firmly's house, he met Godfrey, who, suspecting that all was not right with his friend, had followed with the intention of assisting in case of need.

"This faithful, eccentric, and unfortunate young man," said Hurstwood, with a sigh, "in my presence met with a fate

he little deserved. So inveterate a hatred did he bear to Reuben, his father-in-law, that accidentally hearing his voice foremost in the pursuit, in spite of all my remonstrances, he leapt upon a bank that enclosed the coppice, just as we were in a fair way of effecting our escape, and with a pistol loaded in his hand, was, I fear, about to wreak his vengeance under the weak excuse of self-preservation, when by an order from the lips of Julius Pennington, a ball anticipated his intention, and sent him reeling to my feet. I endeavoured to raise him; but he begged me, in a faint and dying voice, to hasten to the other side of the wood, where in all probability I should find Firmly; for that without his assistance, I should only endanger my own life by remaining. Conscious of the truth of this, I obeyed his request, and I remember well, as I was about to lose sight of him in the thick shade of the underwood, accidentally turning round, and seeing him em-

ploying the remaining portion of his strength in cocking his pistol and preparing for some deliberate revenge.

"Nor was I mistaken, for on returning to the place, after an ineffectual search for the farmer, I found Reuben weltering in his blood, and Godfrey stretched perfectly lifeless near him, a gleam of hideous satisfaction still distorting his features. It was my intention to have removed the body of my poor friend as soon as the gloom of night would allow me to do it with safety; but the arrival of a party from the house, deputed no doubt in search of their comrade, caused me to fly the spot, and make the best of my way out of that part of the country, now so dangerous for me to inhabit."

Without detaining our readers with those details of his other wanderings, which, though doubtless interesting in the highest degree to Rachel, would perhaps be somewhat tedious to them, we will give from Hurstwood's own mouth

the events that attended and succeeded his capture up to the time of his meeting with Rachel at the inn.

"I had thus wandered forlorn and destitute, without one friend on earth, or even the means of procuring the necessaries of life, when, hungry and almost fainting with fatigue, I entered a retired town on the borders of Wales, and urged to desperation by absolute want, ventured to solicit aid at an inn, which too invitingly attracted my notice. While I was greedily feeding upon the pittance with which their charity supplied me, I perceived a man in the dress of a gamekeeper narrowly watching me, and to my great consternation, found that it was the same Beechley whom I had before seen twice in company with young Pennington.

"No sooner was his back turned than I left the town, and endeavoured by taking bye-paths to elude the vigilance that I well knew would be used for my capture. But all my efforts were vain. The

whole country was let loose, and to escape was an utter impossibility. I was seized, dragged to the town, accompanied by a multitude, who endeavoured to display a mistaken loyalty by offering every insult to one they considered as guilty of the two enormous crimes of popery and rebellion.

"You may well imagine the consternation of young Pennington when informed by his satellite of the existence of one whose fate he seemed to have considered as certain a fact; which I can only attribute to mistake, owing to the darkness of the night when Godfrey and Reuben were committed to the devouring wave, heavily weighted, lest their bodies should be again cast up by the tide.

"Never shall I forget the look of determined vengeance with which he surveyed me on his first visit to my prison. He ordered my irons to be increased till I thought the very weight would have terminated my existence; and never did

he altogether lose sight of me or the walls of my prison till by a summary process I was tried, found guilty, and condemned to the death of a traitor.

"After this event, so very desirable to him, I was entrusted into the keeping of his uncle's servants, who happened, as you know, to be the sheriff, and he placed sufficient confidence in them to allow them to escort me to M——, while he hurried forward to prepare every thing for the long and anxiously desired crisis of my fate. Of what passed from the time of my seeing you, my dearest Rachel, at the inn, and the sensations with which I concluded my melancholy journey, I will say nothing. The sweet—the almost incredible—the noble earnest you gave me of the sincerity of your affection, will never be forgotten so long as a heart beats within my bosom; and I shall ever think the devotion of a whole life too little to repay you!

"After you left the gaoler and myself

in the archway of the tower, scarcely a moment had elapsed ere Julius Pennington, who it seems could not rest while his revenge and jealousy remained unsatiated, stepped up to the outer door of the prison, and finding it unlocked and ajar, he rashly and unadvisedly rushed towards the spot where we stood only half concealed, and first meeting the gaoler, flashed a pistol in his face without the least notice. The man finding that his perfidy was discovered, seized his antagonist with an iron grasp, and without further ceremony hurled him over the battlement of the bridge into the stream below.

"So quickly was this extraordinary feat performed, that I had no time to remonstrate, even had I been inclined; and as the gaoler forthwith took to his heels, without any further notice of me, I was compelled to delay my own flight in order to perform an act of humanity which I could not but think due even

to my bitterest enemy. I made my way to the bank of the river, and after some difficulty, for the second time in the course of one year, extricated the same individual from a watery grave.

"I carried, or rather dragged him, half dead as he was, to the tower, and once more entering the gloomy apartment in which I had been confined, deposited him on the same wretched couch on which he had destined me to sleep for the last time. Carefully locking the doors after me, fearing lest my escape should be discovered before I had got clear off, I threw the keys into the river, and mounting a horse which was turned loose in a neighbouring field, I rode several miles at a full gallop, and then leaving the animal to find his way back to his owner, soon secured an almost impenetrable retreat in a cottage on the skirts of Byewood forest, where I had understood from Godfrey that his mother

had removed, subsequently to his departure to the opposite coast.

"Such, my dear Rachel, is the conclusion of a series of extraordinary events and vicissitudes of fortune, such as have rarely, I am convinced, ever fallen to the lot of one mortal. That all the trials I have undergone, have been kindly meant by an all-disposing Providence, I do not doubt, and that I shall reap the benefit of them in my future life, I am equally convinced.

> "Who has not known ill fortune, never knew
> "Himself."

"If by sad experience, my eyes have been opened to my own defects of temper and of judgment, I have acquired a fund of moral wealth, which will enrich me as long as I live; and in the many dangers from which I have been preserved, the many difficulties over which I have been able to triumph, I have learnt a solemn lesson of dependance

upon the Divine protection and guidance, which I trust will influence the actions of my whole life."

To Rachel, embued as her mind was with genuine religious feeling, this mode of reasoning, and this application of the clouded era of his existence, was peculiarly delightful; and she each day found fresh cause to look with additional respect and admiration, upon the noble and uncommon strain of sentiment which, though without the least affectation, occasionally issued from the lips of her lover. She felt that her lot would be a happy one, and she was thankful.

CHAPTER IX.

At length, the arrival of Lord Norland and the Count de Ruse, at Hurstwood, which had been prepared for their reception, opened the way to those interesting disclosures and discussions, which, as the parties were now situated, the imaginations of our readers will easily supply.

It was a happy day for Rachel, when her love was sanctioned by the unreserved approbation of her uncle, and when the count, putting off the diplomatic stiffness of his manner, affectionately saluted her, and called her, in fond anticipation, by the endearing name of daughter.

No one took a livelier interest in these new arrangements than Robert Kirkbye, and it was out of compliment to his earnest request, that Rachel at length con-

sented to have her marriage celebrated the same day. The arrival of Sir Ingelram and his fair companion completed the joyous party, and while Rachel was entertained with the vivacity and manly roughness of the former, she saw sufficient in the latter to justify her friend Robert's choice, and had repeatedly occasion to congratulate Mrs. Kirkbye, on the very promising successor she was about to have at Kilbank. Indeed, the sprightliness and good-humour of her intended daughter-in-law, was balanced by so considerable a portion of good sense and good feeling, that Mrs. Kirkbye was more than satisfied with her son's prospects, and now she had no further wish, than to find the ancient amity and communion of interest exist between the houses of Hurstwood and Kilbank, which had been so incontrollably dormant for so many years.

But during all this time, what has become of Lady Anna? The answer which

Lord Norland gave to his niece, some time previous to her marriage, will afford some clue.

"You may visit your aunt, Rachel, but the result will afford you little satisfaction. On my arrival at Covecourt, about the time you left it, I found her there, her spirit completely broken by the unmanly and inhuman treatment she had experienced from the very person whose cause she had espoused so decidedly, but so shamefully. The plans of young Pennington were arbitrary, indeed! I am convinced, from the astonishing lengths to which he suffered himself to proceed, that had you once been in his power, no human aid could have extricated you; and he no doubt calculated upon all his offences being ultimately forgiven, if you were once his, past all possibility of redemption.

"Fearful of your aunt being intimidated by my presence, into a declaration of all that had passed, he resolved to re-

move her to a place which I was not likely to visit, till by some sudden act of violence he had succeeded in trepanning you, and then, no doubt, she was to have been made the further tool and sanction of his iniquitous designs.

"To such a length of daring will bad principles lead an ambitious mind! Your aunt, it seems, resisted this removal to which she had once yielded assent, and that was the cause of a mode of treatment, the effects of which she will feel for life. I found her in a state of absolute delirium. Against you and Julius Pennington she uttered the most bitter reproaches, and her pride has received a shock, which I had hoped would have had a lasting effect upon her conduct. But I am sorry to say, she is speedily relapsing into her former routine of absurdity, and I have been compelled to give up all idea of raising her fortunes, well knowing the bad use she would make of my indulgence.

"She has, however, more than mere comforts in her power. I have expressed to her my high and lasting indignation for her tyrannical conduct towards you, and she is fully aware, that every supply I concede to her wants, is now rather in consequence of your intercession, than my own conviction of her deserving any thing but contempt."

Though Rachel felt the justice and perhaps the expediency of so severe a mode of treatment towards her aunt, yet she could not forbear interceding in her favour, and she earnestly begged that Lady Anna might not be exposed to the humiliating idea, that she was indebted to her for any thing, much less the necessaries of life.

His lordship, however, wasperemptory, and insisted in this instance upon exercising his own judgment. "She is my own sister, Rachel, and I have known her from infancy. Unchecked, she would be

unhappy, and on small means and without the power of making mischief, moreover with a little occasional correction of her pride and inordinate ambition, she may get through life tolerably."

The marriage of Harry Hurstwood, besides the splendid rejoicings which enlivened the whole country side, and made it the talk of ensuing generations, was distinguished by two other circumstances, interesting in themselves as they displayed the liberality of the parties concerned.

In the first place, old Mr. Pennington was released from prison,—his remaining debt was cancelled,—and though he and his family were for ever debarred from returning to St. Marions—yet an allowance was made to him for life out of the proceeds of the estate.—Secondly, when the settlements came to be read over and signed, a deed of gift was presented to his son by the Count de Ruse, resigning to him the mansion and estates

of Hurstwood, with the manors, rights, royalties and other appurtenances belonging to the same, for his own sole use and benefit. And further, the count declared it to be his intention to settle in London, near to his friend Lord Norland; and a hint was given to the young couple, that in this case they would need no house in town, which they were expected to visit, whenever they could tear themselves from their beloved Hurstwood.

We must not forget to add that Godfrey's mother was settled comfortably on her own farm again, which was purchased for her in consequence of the services rendered by her and her son; and poor Ruth and John Drew too, found refuge on the estate, and lived and died in the generous regard of their young mistress.

As to Julius Pennington, what can we say further than we have said? To a soul like his, devoid of generosity, and cankered with envy and jealousy, the pro-

asperity of those he had endeavoured to crush, administered a gall, which no language can express. Foiled in his base designs, despised by all, suffering severely from the punishment he had brought upon himself, and now rendered totally powerless by the poverty of his means, and the contempt into which he was sunk, he was glad finally to accept a commission in a regiment ordered for long foreign service, and Rachel more than suspected that even this was procured by the interest of her husband, whose principle it ever was to requite evil with good.

Again, then, gentle reader, do the halls of Hurstwood resound with the voice of happiness and joy. Virtue and love are triumphant over jealousy and persecution. The almost dying embers of ancestral fame are rekindled with double lustre, and the lowly fortunes of the exiled family rise to more than their former

splendour, having been purified in the bitter, but useful school of protracted adversity.

THE END.

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